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By Alan Alexander, Genevieve Cogman, Jack Norris,
Neall Raemonn Price and Andrew Watt

Credits

Authors: Alan Alexander, Genevieve Cogman, Jack Norris, Neall Raemonn Price and Andrew Watt
Comic Scripter: Carl Bowen
Developer: John Chambers
Editor: Carl Bowen
Creative Director: Rich Thomas
Art Direction and Layout: Brian Glass
Artists: Gordon Bennetto, John Floyd, Groundbreakers Studio (with Paolo Aguasin, Jezreel Rojales and Kriss Sison), Andrew Hepworth, Shipeng Lee and Melissa Uran
Cover Art: Groundbreakers Studio (with Brian Valeza)

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Scroll of Heroes™

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HEY, YOU'RE AWAKE! I THOUGHT YOU WAS GONNA DIE FOR SURE.
I NEVER SEEN SOMEBODY TAKE SUCH A BEATING AS YOU AND LIVE.
WHAT HAP ...WUH...
EASY. YOU WAS HALF DROWNED. I FISHED YOU OUT OF THE CANAL YESTERDAY.
YOU GOT BOTH LEGS BROKE, ONE ARM AND SOME RIBS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE.
AND YOU HAD THESE STUCK IN YOUR ARMS AND LEGS.
I BROKE 'EM OFF BEST I COULD, BUT I'M NO DOCTOR.
YOU'RE PANTHER, AIN'T YOU? THE PIT CHAMPION?
I SEEN YOU FIGHT LOTS OF TIMES. I EVEN STOOD IN LINE TO MEET YOU ONCE.
REMEMBER? I SAID YOU WAS HANDSOME, AND YOU KISSED MY CHEEK.
I MADE THIS FOR YOU.
I WAS GONNA SEW IT ON MY DRESS.
DON'T YOU WORRY. I'M GONNA TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOU.

INTRODUCTION

Show me a hero and I will write you a tragedy.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald,
The Crack-Up

Although their exploits often pale in comparison to those of the Exalted, the many mortal heroes of Creation struggle just as valiantly to achieve their more modest goals. Although mortal man is deemed insignificant by the more ignorant of the world's powers, the wise realize the great strength it wields as a whole. Of what use is an Exalted general without an army to command? From whom springs the Essence of prayer that fuels the gods? Whose beliefs bulwark Creation against the savage tides of the Wyld? Whose lineages bear the blood of Dragons and play host to Celestial Exaltations? Creation's greatest enemies recognize this strength and seek either to corrupt or eliminate mortals to engineer their triumph.

How to Use This Book

Scroll of Heroes provides the rules and background to run a game that focuses upon heroic mortal characters (or on Celestial Exalts prior to their Exaltation) or to design such characters as allies or antagonists for other **Exalted** games. The book's contents are as follows:

Chapter One: Mortal Life in Creation

This chapter details what it's like to live as a mortal in Creation. It examines what it takes to rise above one's station to become a hero, with specific attention paid to the differences between rural and urban life and those owing to the region of Creation in which one is raised.

Chapter Two: Character Creation and Traits

This chapter supplies the rules needed to create a heroic mortal character. Also in this chapter are traits unique to such characters, as well as information on how to adjust existing traits for heroic mortals.

Chapter Three: Merits and Flaws

This section of the book focuses on Merits and Flaws, optional traits to customize **Exalted** characters, mortal or otherwise.

Chapter Four: Crafted Races

This chapter supplies the information needed to design and play a heroic mortal character from one of the surviving blessed races crafted by the Solar Exalted in the First Age.

Chapter Five: Children of the Mighty

This chapter supplies the rules one needs to create a God-Blooded character. Also in this chapter, one can find traits unique to such characters, as well as information on how to adjust existing traits for the God-Blooded.

Chapter Six: Storytelling

The book's final chapter describes the special factors one must consider when storytelling a game about mortals in a world of Exalted.

I TOLD YOU THOSE BASTARDS WOULD COME BACK!
YOU'RE... YOU'RE SURE IT WAS THEM?
I GOT A GOOD LOOK. THEY WERE DEFINITELY SCAR-HAND TRIBE.
DOES THE MAGISTRATE KNOW ABOUT THIS?
YES, THE MAGISTRATE MUST BE TOLD. HE STOPPED THE SCAR-HANDS BEFORE.
AS MAYOR, I HAVE A CLEAR DUTY TO GO FIND HIM... YES, THAT'S IT.
NO TIME. THEY'LL BE HERE BY MORNING.
MORNING!
NOT AGAIN!
OH GODS!
STOP IT! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
THE SCAR-HANDS WILL WIPE US OUT THIS TIME.
NO! THE MAGISTRATE KILLED THEIR SHAMAN AND THEIR WASP DEMON! REMEMBER?
THEY'RE NO BETTER THAN A BANDIT GANG NOW!
LISTEN! THE SCAR-HANDS ARE JUST MEN, AND LAZY COWARDS BESIDES!
BUT THIS IS OUR HOME! WE HAVE THE WEAPONS AND THE WILL TO PROTECT IT!
WE DON'T NEED A MAGISTRATE! WE CAN TEACH THESE THUGS A LESSON OURSELVES!
YEAH!
LET'S DO IT!
COME AND GET IT!

CHAPTER ONE
MORTAL LIFE IN CREATION

Among some gods, when drunk on ambrosia and awake to the fundamental truths of Creation, a certain thought arises: *What if we are not the rulers of Creation?* For it is true that the gods treat mortals as playthings. Even those gods bound by the Immaculate Philosophy are still capable of working their will on and through the shaping of mortal lives. No mortal can resist a god's will, or even claim to resist an Exalt's commanding presence. Truly, Creation must belong by right to those who can work Charms and shape destiny as a potter shapes clay.

And yet…

For every little deity and spirit, there are ten thousand mortals. For every Exalt, there are a million people who will never call upon the power of Essence to light themselves like a beacon. By sheer numbers, the world of mortals overwhelms the world of gods and Exalts as the ocean swallows the stream. Moreover, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth takes the Exalted back into itself, again and again. However long the lives of the Dragon-Blooded or the Celestials are, the Chosen can never escape the deep tide of humanity that is their foundation and their ultimate crown of being. No matter how glorious a destiny a Solar might have, he is dust—and to dust he will return, to become a mortal again in due course. Such is the order of things, as it has always been and always will be, until Chaos unmakes Creation and Yu-Shan falls. Gods scheme and Exalts bluster, but mortals are the glue and mortar that holds Creation in being.

Humans, whether they have webbed feet and gills, wings and feathers, fur and blubber—wherever they happen to live—must acknowledge that they are all "nobody special." A human can try to live up to her greatest potential, but she always knows in the back of her mind that the least Exalt can overpower her and do greater things. Beyond them, gods and God-Blooded, elementals, spirits and monstrous beings from beyond the doors of the

world are all individually more powerful than any dozen mortals. Moreover, every culture in the world of Creation ultimately traces its history back to the near-monolithic cultural unity of the First Age, when I AM provided the best in music, art, literature and philosophy from the whole known world to everyone. The result today is a broad range of cultural divergence, but an underlying recognition that the typical mortal can work to constrain and limit the acts of gods and Exalts, but almost never oppose them directly. This is who mortal heroes are—who they must be—in the Age of Sorrows.

What Is This Dust?

The life expectancy of the average mortal in the Age of Sorrows is 56 years for men and 48 for women. The Contagion and the collapse of the First Age system of hospitals and trained physicians and midwives has fallen hard on the mortal populace. People are subject to disease, accident, age, malfeasance and war. Infection follows injury, and infection means death. And these are only the dooms of ordinary mortal machinations. There is also death by sorcery, collateral damage of Exalted struggle or petulant god, disaster and ruin by raksha and behemoth. The catalogue of doom is extensive, wide-ranging and random.

What does the ordinary mortal do with threescore years? The first five years are spent as a child in a village or city neighborhood, protected by family or coddled by neighbors (or they are a desperate struggle for survival). The second five years are spent learning a trade—most often the work of hands rather than brain, for human labor and human life is cheap. The second decade will see marriage and the start of a family, as neighbors and culture push the young into ordained roles. A third decade sees the mortal to positions of responsibility in community and work. The fourth decade sees the man to seniority and eldership, while the woman enters menopause and becomes grandmother and elder counsel to the young women of her community. In the fifth and sixth decades, as the body's joints lock up and the muscles sag, the work becomes harder and the eyes grow dim. The middle-aged grow weary from caring simultaneously for young and old, and the demands of the young always win out in the end. The old are so near to rebirth, after all.

Children of Earth

Almost all mortals in Creation are dependent, to one degree or another, on the life and work of those who rarely stray more than 20 miles from the place of their birth. These Children of Earth, as they are sometimes styled, work the land, drive the animals to and from market and

hustle at the market stalls. They live in a state of quiet self-reliance unless the Exalted or the little gods disrupt their lives. They have little, and they know that even that can be taken from them. Their security comes from being honorable respected members of their communities, having lots of children and attracting as little notice as possible. The disreputable lose their land and sometimes their lives long before they become community elders. Far too many children die before their parents do, claimed by disease, accident or war. Of course, the loud upstarts tend to vanish before the ferocity of the inquisitors and the mighty men who rule them.

In some places, the Children of Earth are called peasants. In other places, they are serfs. In others, they are slaves, villeins, habitants, rustics, goodmen or small farmers. By and large, they are conservative, suspicious of outsiders and more suspicious of change, fearful of their safety and jealous of their neighbors. There is nothing so small that they know cannot be taken away, even their lives. That makes them dangerous, indeed, when roused in large numbers.

Rousing them, of course, is difficult for the un-Exalted. The Children of Earth prefer to do their work in neighborhoods and regions that are insular and resistant to change. Few willingly join armies or rise in protest in the streets. They mind their own business except when it gives them an advantage over an immediate neighbor. It takes tremendous losses before their standard pattern of fear will push them over the line into outspoken anger and violent rage.

The Heroes

In contrast to the Children of Earth are the heroes. The five archetypes of mortal heroes are described more fully in Chapter Two, but warriors, priests, savants, criminals and brokers are those who seek a different life than they would have as Children of Earth. These heroes choose to live in a different way than the vast mass of humanity—a way closer to the Exalted and farther from the peasantry—one that most Children of Earth can barely imagine.

Selfhood

At the core of every such hero is a kernel of selfhood different from that of most mortals. While the average Child of Earth lives within a routine framework of simple happiness and baroque fears, the heroes live within a framework of personal responsibility. The hero assumes that destiny is something that affects the gods and the Exalted, but not him. To be a hero is to believe one can influence and change the world in a meaningful way.

Accordingly, the hero seeks to make change occur, and each archetype seeks to make change occur in a particular way. The warrior seeks to make change occur through combat and achievement of personal honor and reputation on the battlefield. Priests use their abilities to work change among the common people and bring about new relationships between the people and the gods. Savants seek to rediscover ancient knowledge and adapt it to the current realities of mortal life in order to bridge Creation's glorious past and its promising future. Criminals wish to use their natural talents and mastered skills to gain power or wealth for themselves. Brokers work to elevate themselves or their purposes in the world to new levels of power and strength. Underlying all these drives are the personal beliefs that it is possible to bring about change and that one need not be an Exalt or a god to do it.

A Place in the Family

Mortal heroes in Creation are rarely loners, though they can be that. More often, they are intertwined in webs of family and tribe that run deep. While every region has its own rules for determining kinship and tribal membership, there are commonalities that affect all of them. Heroes are born into these webs of relationship, and no matter how much they might wish to see themselves as apart from them, they must accept at least some of the rules of these societies in order to function within them.

Even the barbarian, far from home, accepts a place in this order as a foreigner. The locals know nothing of his kinship, of his tribe or family or lineage. They might not know his training or his membership in a company. They might call upon the foreigner for help and pay him in jade or scrip or silver, but they will never admit him deep into their counsels or make a place in their hearts for him until he has proven his loyalty to them again and again.

Kinship

A hero stands at the center of a series of concentric circles or webs of responsibility and mutual assistance, which she can reject, ignore or accept as she chooses. The first of these nets is the net of kinship, or family.

Few heroes are born into families of heroes. Men and women grow to greatness through experiences that allow them to understand that they have the power to make things happen. Most Children of Earth find the concept that they are agents of change to be deeply frightening. Causing change is a power reserved for the strong, not the weak, and they believe themselves to be weak. Yet, the Children of Earth bring many more children into the world, and most parents secretly hope for a hero, even just one, among their progeny. A hero is more likely to provide well for his parents and extended family in the future, if she has sufficient loyalty to the family line. One hero in a family is more likely to rouse brothers and sisters to the cause, rally nieces and nephews to greatness, and carry family members to new heights of power and wealth, out of grinding poverty or even slavery.

Adventure Seeds: Kinship

Although some players might prefer their characters to be only children and orphans to boot, mortal series thrive on family and kinship connections. On one hand, it is difficult to accomplish much in Creation without aid and allies. On the other hand, no one can manipulate, bear grudges and exasperate like family. Sample family connections that can generate stories include:

- Five brothers reunite for an eccentric uncle's funeral and learn he was murdered.
- A priest hurries home to perform a family wedding, only to discover it's his own wedding celebration.
- A warrior receives a visit from three young and difficult cousins, intent on learning the martial arts for very different reasons.
- A savant is asked to come and deal with a mysterious plague in her home village.

On the hero's side, the kinship connection could be very strong or very weak. If she buys into the connection, her dependency and perceived weakness might be a liability for achieving what she wishes to do. If she ignores the connection, she could be seen as less compassionate or dangerously disconnected from society. Even the orphan has a range of connections and family in Creation—for only children are rare in a world without safety nets or social service. As a result, the hero usually walks a fine line between connection and disconnection from family, between responsibility to family and distance from it.

Lineage and Tribe

Mortals in Creation also belong to lineages. These groups are called clans in some parts of Creation, tribes in others, extended families or lineages elsewhere, or even houses or bloodlines. Most governments and nations in the Age of Sorrows are weak and fragile things. They concentrate on maintaining their borders, setting certain rules of behavior and enforcing certain taxes and tariffs. Law-enforcement functions and social services are virtually nonexistent outside tributaries of the Realm and the largest independent states in the Threshold. As a consequence, lineages provide many social functions for mortals, such as caring for widows and orphans, managing low-level crime, punishing violations of civil order and choosing local leadership. Lineages arrange funerals, settle boundary disputes, celebrate births, arrange marriages and divorces and resolve feuds between families. They frequently consist of 20 to 200 families or more. In a world in which the Exalted ride roughshod over so many institutions, lineages are a kind of social glue that can outlast almost any other kind of organization.

Most lineages function the same way regardless of where in Creation they are located. A pecking order among the families in the lineage exists. All the families of the lineage are arranged in networks of obligation and dependency. When an issue arises between two family members, members of the next oldest generation intervene to re-establish peace and harmony. Conflicts between families are settled between the most prestigious member of the next oldest generation above the generation in which the issue exists. Conflicts between families of different lineages are settled between the most prestigious members of the generation above the level where the conflict is found.

Prestige is determined by two variables, lineality and leadership, and lineality always takes first priority. A lineage might be patrilineal or matrilineal. (The paternal side of a family tree is more prestigious in a patrilineal lineage, while in a matrilineal society, the maternal side of the tree is more prestigious.) Then leadership is determined. Leadership can be either patriarchal or matriarchal. If a matrilineal society is patriarchal, then an offender's mother's eldest brother will intervene first in a conflict, but the mother herself will intervene in a matriarchal lineage. In a matriarchal patrilineal clan, the father's sister is the first to intervene, while the father of the offender intervenes in a patriarchal society.

Issues of prestige and position in a lineage come before actual ability. If the person who is called upon to intervene in a given conflict is incompetent, senile, distracted, dysfunctional, addled or enchanted, it makes no difference. Only the death of the incompetent authority allows the issue to be bumped to the next appropriate person. Even then, the clan's fortunes might be at a significant disadvantage. The clan's newest resolving authority is expected to abide at least in part by the treaties and solutions previously agreed upon. Only a new conflict can open a discussion of prior issues.

Most resolutions between lineages take the form of social contracts or reparations. In some parts of Creation, violence is the standard method of resolving lineage-level conflict. In most places, however, resolving conflicts through direct violence is frowned upon. Violence is often used to bring the appropriate party to negotiation, but the violence is usually directed against the children, nieces and nephews of the person with the prestige and standing to bring the matter to a successful conclusion, rather than the person himself. To attack that one directly is to involve the grandparents or even the great-grandparents and make the issue messier than before.

Adventure Seeds: Lineage

Lineages make for great storytelling tools in both mortal and Exalted series. Consider using any of the following in your game:

- An elder commissions the characters as her messengers and envoys to resolve a decades-long feud.
- A warrior is summoned home to learn that he has become the adoptive father and presumptive husband to the orphans and widow of a long-time foe.
- Members of a criminal's family begin hunting her for dishonoring the lineage.
- After a violent riot, a priest learns that he is the eldest and most prestigious member of his generation. He's now responsible for making peace with the murderers of his nephews.
- A savant uncovers evidence that an agreement was falsified to resolve a brutal war a generation ago.

Founding a Lineage

While it is hard to start a new lineage, it is not impossible. Most lineages are ancient, dating to the time of the Contagion or earlier. Many were founded by the heroic mortals that led friends and families out of failing First Age cities or helped disparate groups survive in the wilderness. Few wield much authority outside their home region. That said, even ancient lineages sometimes splinter upon the death of a particularly prestigious elder when two or more juniors have equal standing.

Lineages, like societies as a whole, are full of individuals with terrible problems and no resources. Figuring out who gets what in resource-starved communities often depends on one's prestige within the larger framework of family and tribe. The ones who get left out lead lives of desperation. Heroes have a unique opportunity to form new lineages, by stepping in to help those who cannot help themselves. Sometimes they provide a new business or diplomatic solution that employs or relieves the burdens of the weak.

Trust and compassion are the foremost elements of any new lineage. A hero intent on founding one cannot simply offer help once and then turn to other problems. It is a continuous process by which the hero returns again and again to the same people in the same community to lift them out of misery. At the same time, the hero cannot expect that the elders of an existing lineage will let people turn their loyalties over to a new network of families. The hero will need warriors and brokers alike to secure and retain continuing rights as a new lineage. When a family abandons its obligations to an old clan to join a new one, it risks bloody vengeance and genocide. Ill will and vengeance killings can persist for decades if not generations.

In later stages of the formation of a lineage, the hero's bloodline and progeny become more important. The founder needs to have children who are equal to the challenges of retaining a hold on the loyalties of the initial families that bought in, and who have the military and diplomatic skills to hold the emergent tribe together. This requires that the hero have properly educated children.

Conflicts come in many varieties. They might be issues of physical boundaries between farms or territories. They might be low-level tribal warfare or patterns of livestock thievery. They might be regular patterns of calculated insults or duels or sexual insult. In general, most lineage elders will agree on one of five stages of punishment: public apology, payment of reparations in goods, payment of reparations in service, marriage or adoption, and honor killing. For low-level crimes that caused minimal damage, the offender will be asked to deliver a public apology to her victim. For higher-level offenses, a payment of money or mobile property might suffice. Land could even change hands if the crime is serious enough. For especially egregious acts, an offender might have to surrender time and effort and perform some act or service that could take days, weeks, months or years to complete. Some individuals find themselves formally married to the widows of their victims or established as the foster parents of their orphans. If an offender is utterly unrepentant, his own family might decide to assassinate him for the good of the lineage and to preserve its standing.

Heroes are born into these systems, and while some choose to ignore them, they cannot fully escape them. It might be that one becomes the most prestigious member of his generation, or that his elders intervene in his life to resolve conflicts with mortal enemies. Only running away and traveling long distances outside the web of relationships between lineages can protect one completely from their influence. Even fleeing entails certain risks to those he leaves behind, and woe befalls the hero who lands among expatriates with living ties to his homeland.

Age Set and Circle

The lineage of a hero exerts itself in another way in many societies of Creation, as well. While not all nations practice age rites, a great many do. In age rites, all of the individuals of approximately the same age attend

and go through an initiation rite and proceed to the next stage of life together. These events are once-in-a-lifetime progressions and usually mark transitions between certain stages of life. Among males, infants become children; children become men; men become husbands and householders; householders become elders; and elders become lorekeepers. Among females, infants become girls; girls menstruate and become women; women become brides and then become mothers; mothers become elders; and elders become grandmothers.

While different cultures use different names for these stages, and not all societies have all levels, their essential function is the same. Infants get to play all the time, while children are expected to begin to learn what their role in society will be as adults. Men carry out the work of guarding a lineage's rights and enforcing their rules. Householders and mothers work to increase the wealth of their family and lineage. Elders, grandmothers and lorekeepers secure the bounds of daily life with rituals to honor ancestors and little gods.

Age-set cultures usually hold special ceremonies every 10 or 12 years designed to raise all members of a lineage or tribe of about the same age to the next rank in society at once. If an individual misses the ritual, that person loses standing in his family and lineage, and loses prestige and influence in society as a whole. The ceremonies are time consuming and elaborate, usually occupying several days of celebration, fasting, feasting and ritual, as well as contests of skill.

Different societies give these rituals different names, but in general, they follow a basic five-step process. The candidates for initiation to the next stage in life are first taken out of their old category. Then comes a celebration of the new stage, in which stories, songs, dancing and feasting may occur. Candidates then undergo some sort of vision-quest, which might involve meeting with spirits or ancestors of the lineage, or a journey into the wilderness. There is some ritual marking, either with paint or dye, or with tattoos or body modification. Finally, the candidates play the principal roles in a ritual that signifies their new place in the community.

Functioning slightly differently than age sets are circles. While age-set rites are usually conducted for all members of a society across several lineages, circle rites are usually conducted within only certain lineages—the families of traditional chieftains or priests, for example. The rites are conducted in the same way, but for much smaller groups of people, and usually in secret.

School and Society

Civilization brings with it many elements not found among the lineages and tribes of the outer Threshold.

Adventure Seeds: Age Sets and Circles

There are many ways that age sets and circles can be incorporated into a game. For example:

- A warrior is expected to put aside his weapons as the time comes for him to start a household and assume the duties of a householder.
- A priest must return home to be the principal celebrant of his tribe's age-set rites.
- Raksha attack an age-set rite, killing many and disrupting a community's relationships with the spirit world.
- A broker is asked to guarantee safety for the circle rites of a lineage long in hiding and believed destroyed.
- A criminal is barred entrance to the age-set rites of her clan due to her reprehensible behavior.
- Mortal monks of the Immaculate Order appear to prevent an age-set rite from occurring, denouncing it as heretically lionizing the Anathema.

Adventure Seeds: School and Society

There are many ways to start adventures in the context of a character's place among the schools and societies of mortal life. Here are just a few:

- A warrior must return to his martial arts academy, where he has been named a candidate to succeed the dying master.
- A savant is imprisoned by a society who believes she has the secret to a First Age longevity treatment.
- A pirate society raids a school to capture young physicians and tutors to sell into slavery.
- A caravan society steals children along their route to train as merchants and criminals.
- A school of thaumaturgy inflicts horrors on its neighborhood when the masters lose their souls to demons.

Among these are vestiges of the First Age—the school or college and the society.

Not many people in the Second Age of Man get to attend school of any sort. Some villages in the Realm and in the inner Threshold have schools, as do some towns and most cities, but they are expensive and teach little other than some writing, literature and mathematics. Most serious study is done with private tutors at great expense or as a result of slavery. Nonetheless, schools do exist and engage in teaching of highly specialized pursuits, ranging from the martial arts to the study of religion, calligraphy, law, medicine and, occasionally, thaumaturgy. While a few such institutions are run by Exalted founders, many more have merely mortal faculties. Schools are almost always in tension with lineages and age-set systems, because they usually teach a point of view other than allegiance to family and tribe. As a result, the elders of the clans view schools with suspicion. At the same time, schools provide training in practical and useful arts, so it is difficult for the great families to ignore them or refuse their benefits. A school's leadership has prestige quite apart from the normal lineage system, and the leaders speak from outside it to a degree, even if they belong to a lineage themselves. Control of a famous school also confers prestige upon certain lineages, so that their reputation and standing in the larger society rises, and they gain more power.

While graduates feel a common allegiance and gratitude to their school for past learning, members of a society instead feel gratitude and allegiance to that institution for present profit. Societies include profit-making organizations that transcend family, region and national boundaries: other words for them include company, syndicate, firm, office, agency, fellowship, enterprise and corporation. The Guild is the most famous such venture, though other smaller versions of it exist throughout Creation.

Members of societies usually reject the standard dictates of their lineage and age set in order to pursue profit and pleasure in this life. They wander far from their birthplaces, engage in long-distance trade or profiteering ventures on land and sea, and avoid too much contact with home.

Caste

Many heroes are not bounded solely by tribe, age and training, but by caste as well. Though not every culture in Creation separates people into different categories based on the kind of labor they perform in the world, many cultures do discriminate on the basis of perceived standing in the roster. The Immaculate Philosophy frowns on such ranking of the worth of a human by birth alone, even as it holds that all humans are subordinate to the Dragon-Blooded. Yet, Immaculate monks cannot enforce their sutras at all moments, everywhere. Caste distinction is most common in the South and in the West, while elements of it exist in parts of the North and East. Some vestiges of it survive even on the Blessed Isle.

According to the dictates of caste, a person is born into a family and a role in society that is hers to have throughout her present incarnation in Creation. In general, there are eight layers of caste, though some cultures have more, and some have fewer. At the apex are usually the priests, whose duty it is to enforce a series of ritual taboos that grow increasingly restrictive for the lowest

orders, while granting wide latitudes to the upper castes. Next down are the warriors, whose duty it is to fight for the gods and for the rulers.

Different societies order the next three layers differently, depending on the cultural imperatives at work. Merchants, artisans and savants of various sorts occupy a variety of positions in society, some high and some low. A physician, for example, might be higher than a carpenter but lower than a potter in one culture, while she might be higher than both in another. Some cultures value the luxuries of trade very highly, while others see the middlemen as a necessary evil unworthy of being rewarded with high status in addition to great wealth.

The last two caste levels (the farmers and the laborers) are particularly troublesome. Most cultures in Creation that deal with caste make a clear distinction between the woman who nourishes the seed to produce something edible and the man fit only to dig ditches. Not all cultures agree on which should be accorded higher status than the other. It is important to note that slaves fall outside the normal dictates of caste. In some sense, the mortals of Creation tend not to think of slaves as being part of their culture, but instead regard them as alien. There is a certain freedom in being apart from a caste, but that freedom is difficult to exercise in a nation where caste plays an important role.

Each caste is defined by a set of taboo rules and regulations that may not be violated without consequence. These rules might be religious, economic, political or some combination of all three. Typical taboos include abstaining from certain foods or participation in certain religious rituals or avoiding physical contact with members of other castes. There is the additional wrinkle in Creation that many taboos were created and are enforced by the little gods. They form part of a pact of chiminage between a culture's priesthood and the divinity. As a result, the gods themselves might use their Charms to enforce their will with regard to caste upon a servile and defeated populace.

Adventure Seeds: Caste

Caste violations can kick off all sorts of difficulties for characters, or they can help smooth the way for them to achieve remarkable things.

- A priest must conceal his caste in order to remain in his religious order.
- A girl with a dangerous talent for thaumaturgy comes from the wrong caste to be a magician. Should she be killed or protected and trained?
- A prominent physician suffers ritual contamination and refuses to work just as an outbreak of plague begins.
- A town fears a criminal boss because her high-caste status makes her nearly untouchable.

Region and Nation

As mortal heroes grow in power and reputation, the level and compass of their area of operations grows larger. Heroes act in ways that bring them to the attention of leaders—whether of families or lineages or schools or societies. These leaders then decide whether to support or oppose the heroes in their midst, either as allies in their own desire to change the world or as rivals and enemies intent on destroying their vision.

In the Age of Sorrows, mortal leaders usually desire more of what they already have: a steady stream of income and favors, minimal disruptions to routine and an indolent life undisrupted by allegations of corruption or malfeasance. An absence of armed revolt is considered a necessary precondition to the benefits of leadership.

Village and Town

The first frame of reference in which many an emergent hero operates is that of the villages of a market town. Whether it is a holdover from the First Age or it is a more recently developed pattern, no one knows. Yet on average, 10 villages of no more than a few hundred people will gather around one market town of no more than a few thousand people. Ten such market towns will surround a city of over 10,000 people, and 10 such cities will surround a city of 100,000 people. The realities of agriculture, mining and trade, even with the technologies surviving the collapse of the First Age insist that things be this way. The center of any village can be no farther from the marketplace than the farmer can bring his produce in a day. With the primitive carts and wagons, beasts of burden or barges available, this sets a limit of no more than eight miles from village to nearest market town.

In the Second Age, each market town sits upon one of the tributary lines of the great trade routes that crisscross Creation. The marketplace takes goods from afar and transfers them to local owners in return for sacks of rice, beans, wheat, flour or whatever the locally produced staple is. Jars and bottles of wine, honey, vinegar, and bales of cotton, linen and wool cloth trade hands just as simply. Slaves are bought and sold nearly everywhere.

Assuming that only one in a thousand mortals has the potential to live up to the heroic nature of the archetypes, the typical market town and surrounding villages have around 20 potential heroes living in it. Some will be skillful warriors, while others will be careful physicians, and still others will be diplomats or crime lords. In truth, there are often more like 100 mortals in such an area, with larger destinies than the Children of Earth usually have.

Some will have opinions and missions in conflict with your players' heroes, and some will be allies.

The typical market town, even one of minimal standing, is large enough to support a hierarch. Such towns have room for one or two schools, a society or two, and at least five lineages that work with and against each other. They are also large enough to see at least one annual inspection by the tax collectors of the larger region or realm. Therefore, it is in such places that heroes often first make their mark on the world.

Throughout Creation, towns and villages take different forms. Some are built of wood or stone, while others hang from tree branches or are carved from living rock. Certain fundamentals remain the same, however. Villages are rarely capable of supporting more than one or two businesses, while towns can support 40 or more. The nature of Creation's economies pushes barter to the edges, and pulls money to the center. There is often enough coin or scrip to make a town function, but that wealth rarely travels far from the market. Banks and vault businesses in town, and bandits and robbers outside, pressure even the most avaricious peasant to trade cash for goods and services, and the most precious holders of value such as jade tend to flee the market towns for larger economic centers.

Architecturally, most towns follow a similar plan, with four basic neighborhoods, or wards. The upper ward contains public buildings such as the hall of records, a temple to the local god or gods, the treasury and the town armory. Sometimes, the most prominent families have houses here; other times, it is closed to residences. In frontier areas, a fort and lookout station occupies the highest point, even if it is no more than 15 feet above the surrounding plains. The middle ward holds most of the houses, except for a single street lined with businesses catering to local residents. If the town is a legal center, the courthouse is here. If it's an educational center, the schools are here too. The lower ward holds the main marketplace, where long-distance traders meet with local brokers for the small farmers and manufactories. Just beyond the town walls on the most marginal land is the shantytown for those who work in town but cannot afford rents.

Villages follow a similar plan, with a small cluster of houses within a palisade, defensive ditch or other barrier, and fields set all around outside. Fields closest to the village center are reserved for cereal crops, while outlying farms—each with a defensive perimeter around the house and barns—handle livestock and orchards. The main path from the village leads directly to the nearest market town, while footpaths meander across the fields to the nearest villages in every direction. A road might cut through between two market towns—if not a canal or river—but these tend to be rarities.

Adventure Seeds: Town and Village

Towns and villages might seem like small adventure locales, but in fact, they can be quite packed with serious stories. Many story ideas can be pulled from one's local newspaper and re-imagined for Creation's forgotten hamlets. The "Police Blotter" is often an excellent place to start, but front-page stories are often equally useful. For example:

- Angry veterans of recent wars go on a rampage.
- Idle apprentices use the senility of their master as a cover to brew dangerous mixtures in his workshop.
- The son of a local magistrate leads a gang that terrorizes the women of the town.
- A predatory monster eats farmers and destroys their lands and houses on the community's fringe.
- A reputable merchant in town vanishes with most of the community's money.
- The local tax farmer squeezes profits from the poor in a time of drought and famine.
- A sudden disease overtakes the young men of a village just before the harvest begins.

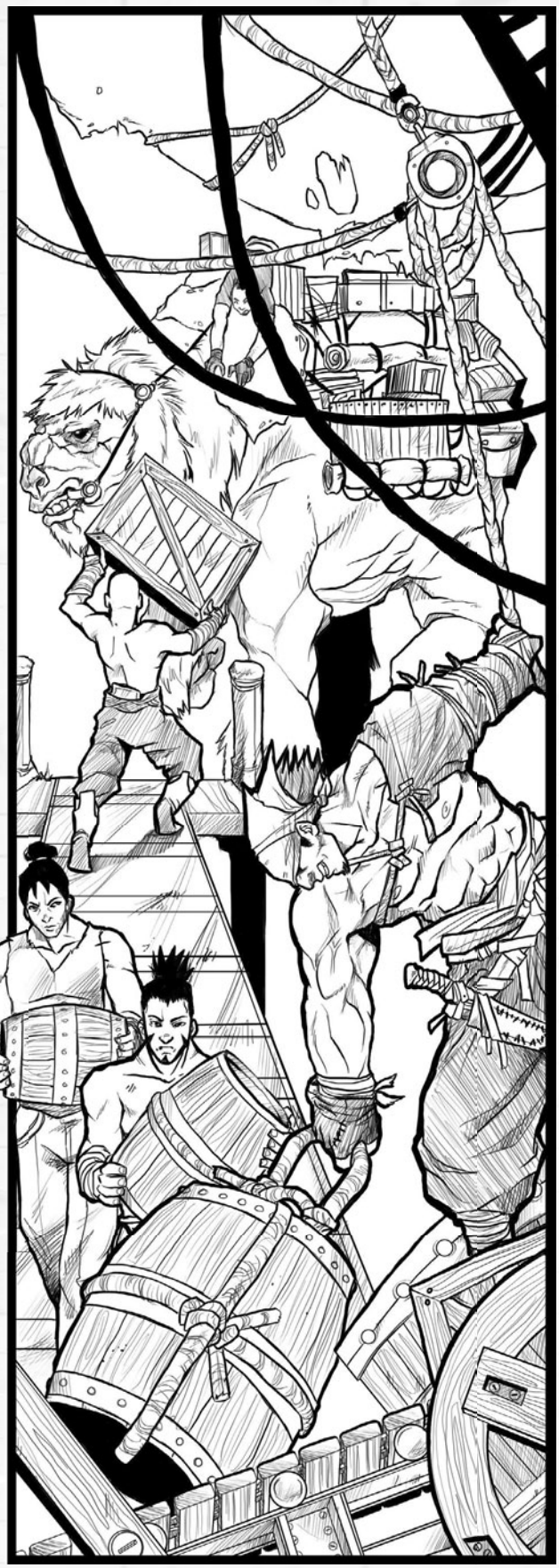
These basic plans repeat all over Creation due to the essential requirements for all settlements to be nourishing, accessible, serviceable and defensible. Human habitations not built according to this plan tend to fail after short periods of time, because the Age of Sorrows is a dangerous time, and it is not safe to live in lonely places without plans and protection.

City and Region

Just as streams pour into rivers and rivers pour into seas, so does the labor of the country find its way to market town, and the market town's trading finds its way to the city exchanges. Like great spiders sitting in their webs, the cities of Creation draw wealth out of the surrounding countryside and into themselves. They then carry this wealth out to the Western Ocean, the Inland Sea or the White Sea and bring luxuries from the farthest reaches of Creation back home again. It is an oft-repeated cycle.

Heroes who can act on a stage the size of city (as opposed to their local neighborhood) or the surrounding region have usually grown quite strong. They are strong enough to attract the notice of the Exalted, who will see them either as a rivals to be dominated, allies to be cultivated or enemies to be eliminated. Rare is the city in Creation that does not hold at least one Exalt within its walls. Rarer still is the Exalt who will not meddle in the lives of mortal heroes grown so strong.

Creation's cities are not like the market towns at all, which are so frequently designed around the same basic plan.



Every city in Creation is different and unique, with some built among trees and others carved into cliff faces above roaring waterfalls. Even so, they do have some things in common. First, every city in Creation is a transport hub, where two or more forms of transportation come together and goods and services cross from one to another type of transport. Oceangoing ships need stevedores and longshoremen to move cargo into barges, and caravans need to break down crates of spices carried on yeddim-back into packets suitable for donkey and camel. These points of transition mean work for thousands of people (and tariffs and taxes for hundreds of bureaucracies). Wherever trade makes the leap from one sort of transport system to another, there is a city.

Second, Creation's cities are led by councils and mayors and princes and priests and gods. Yet, under all the official leadership are two essential truths: They cannot function without bureaucracies, and those bureaucracies cannot effectively manage more than about 7,000 people each with the tools available in the Second Age. A city will grow smoothly and effectively until it reaches a population of about 7,000. Then it will begin to fracture and experience significant growing pains, and without significant reorganization, the community will suffer civil unrest by about 10,000 or 11,000 people.

This rule tends to result in a city being split into a series of districts of between 2,000 and 8,000 adults each, with all having a minimum of three districts; in cities with only two districts, they invariably war with each other. Bureaucracies and city governments evolve to serve each ward separately. Aristocratic or oligarchic cities have celebrations and competitions that pit different districts against each other. Democratic cities have neighborhood councils to address issues at these levels. Cities with First Age technology tend to have larger districts, but even then, the number of city officials tends not to rise above 10 percent of the city's total population except in highly totalitarian urban centers.

Districts are frequently further broken down into neighborhoods, each distinctive and real. Shops and businesses tend to cluster along neighborhood edges, along with parks and other social centers, while neighborhood cores are usually residential. Neighborhoods usually consist of no more than a few hundred families, and there may be six or more neighborhoods crowded into a city ward.

Neighborhoods in Creation are usually organized around a particular theme. Some are be for immigrants and expatriates from elsewhere. Others are organized around specific types of labor. Most have a mix of manufactories, shops, teahouses, homes and public centers in the form of temples, theaters, fountains and plazas. The rich and poor often live in close proximity to one another in older

cities, but the poor often live in taller and less safe buildings where crime is frequent. Even so, many city streets are safe even without the obvious presence of police or soldiers. The nature of community layout in Creation is such that, in the cities, people are often eyes on the street, and a wide range of witnesses and potential defenders are often present to prevent obvious and dangerous criminal activity. The concept of turf is strong in many city dwellers, who correctly fear that crime on their streets will sooner or later turn against them.

Most of all, city life is *dense*. Most cities in Creation, even despite the horrors of disease, accident and war, hold scores of mortals per square mile if not more. Behind walls and other safeguards, cities are simply safer places than most rural areas, and residents try to keep them that way. Safety, employment and the benefits of government (however dubious that might be in the Second Age) all conspire to make cities crowded and confusing places.

Further, cities are often at the center of large regions or territories, which are suitable for storytelling on a grand scale. Whether or not heroes can really defend a city or solve the problems of a region is up to the Storyteller, but several groups of heroes working together almost certainly can do so.

Adventure Seeds: City and Region

City dwellers in the Age of Sorrows have some advantages over their rural cousins. First, most live within walking distance of most goods and services. They have access to a wider range of materials. Yet, there are also far more troubles in close proximity. Some examples include:

- A police force initiates a coup against the legitimate city government.
- A ring of raksha slips inside the city walls to cause mischief.
- Exalted battles outside the city damage its aqueduct system, and it must be repaired in a war zone.
- Widespread crop failure leads to escalating prices, and the heroes must find alternative sources of food.
- A strike among dock workers paralyzes the city's income supply.
- A run on city banks shatters the local economy.
- An earthquake knocks down several prominent manufactories and closes the docks; the city will starve without new work and new trade routes.
- The city's First Age transport system finally fails, and everyone must find new ways to travel around town.
- A gang war erupts between two criminal syndicates.
- A savant discovers a library of ancient texts beneath a collapsed building.

Nation

Mortal heroes who function at the level of a nation are rare. Frequently, each has risen to the top of his or her profession, as the principal general of the kingdom, the crime lord of a city or the chief prelate of the religious hierarchy. They are chancellors of universities, princes of city-states and guardians of ancient secrets.

Yet, being a mortal at this level in the Time of Tumult is not a happy lot. The Anathema have returned, the Wyld Hunt is on the prowl, and the Fair Folk are newly emboldened. What is mortal life against such threats? Whatever they have can be taken from them by any near-god who wants it more. Some mortals, confronted with the awe-inspiring presence of one of the Sun's Chosen, have willingly relinquished all they had. Sometimes, even one of the Dragon-Blooded can cause such awe.

Therefore, mortals at these high levels do their best to immerse themselves in webs of responsibilities, duties and routines. In this way, they imitate the Lawgivers of old, who ruled through ritual and formal patterns of behavior. Mortal leaders who live this way hope that their range of formal duties will dissuade the Exalted from wanting to replace them.

Life on the Blessed Isle

Mortals on the Blessed Isle probably live better than anyone else in Creation. They eat well from the bounty of the three harvests a year, and the manufactories of the Realm produce a huge variety of goods. Police and social services are common, at least in areas where the impending civil war has not yet caused too much disruption. The Scarlet Empress deliberately limited lineage, caste, tribe and other cultural factors over the last seven centuries, so that all the Blessed Isle would look to her first of all. Formal public education protocols, supported by schools run through the monasteries of the Immaculate Order, further limited the capabilities of mortals to act without the approval of the Dragon-Blooded.

Most mortals on the Blessed Isle are peasants or artisans. They work in the fields and manufactories of the Realm, producing food or goods ranging from rice to chopsticks, apples to armor. Few rise to positions of wealth or prominence. A good many younger children will join the Legions, take the entrance exams for the Thousand Scales or seek initiation as monks of the Immaculate Order. Yet, their humble birth often prevents them from rising very high in the ranks of these organizations.

Even so, there has always been room for mortal heroes in the Realm. Judges, archons, engineers, prefects and others thrive on the Blessed Isle, because the Terrestrial Exalts cannot be everywhere at once.

Adventure Seeds: Nation

Several possibilities exist for storytelling at the level of the nation. These stories usually have much vaster sweeps than the typical game, but they allow even relatively fragile mortals to have an effect on a large scale.

- An impoverished royal family seeks to regain its throne and ancient rights.
- A crime lord seeks dominion over the whole kingdom.
- A group of nobles and priests decides to oppose the Exalted usurper who has taken over the kingdom—not by trying to destroy him, but by restraining his actions.
- A hierophant decides to lead a national rebellion against a corrupt god.
- A prince schemes and connives to protect his throne against Dragon-Bloods of the Realm on one hand and the Bull of the North on the other.

Refugees in the Second Age

The assault of the Bull of the North, the actions of the Wyld Hunt, the machinations of the Realm's Great Houses and the sack of Thorns have put thousands of people out of work, forced thousands more from their homes and placed millions more at risk of starvation or disease in the next year. Many have taken to the roads in search of safety and shelter. Columns of refugees can be found everywhere in Creation.

Refugees come in many forms. Often, the first wave consists of physicians and merchants of Gem or Thorns or Whitewall immigrating to city houses in Nexus or other great commercial centers. They have enough wealth and power to simply move their bases of operations from one place to another. Those with the money to get out ahead of the curve usually do so, robbing their country of wealth and intellect at a critical time.

Next, the middle class and intelligentsia abandon their homes. They flee with a few duffel bags, perhaps a cart, and some mobile treasure stuffed in hidden pockets. A few have weapons or hire mercenaries. Most rely on their wits and a soft departure to keep them safe. When they reach their destination, most equip themselves with portable wealth, ready for the next exodus.

Once the disaster falls, those people already on the margins of society take to the roads in an effort to find something better. Often, they travel with little to nothing. They have already been robbed of everything they had—whether land, money, tools or goods. Some are skilled workers, but many more are unskilled laborers. They mass in traveling bands of dozens or hundreds but rarely function as a group. Shamed by the loss of what they had, they are rarely motivated enough to lead others to a new situation of safety and security. While leaders emerge among the diasporas of upper- and middle-class refugees in their final destination, few emerge from this third group until years after resettlement. In the meantime, they are easy pickings for slavers, the Fair Folk, unscrupulous princes and others.

They are also potentially a source of followers for heroes. Unfettered by the usual rules of lineage, age set and national affiliation, they can usually be motivated enough to attach themselves to new leaders. Supporting refugees carries great risks for the would-be hero, however. It is easy to marshal refugees into an army, but the country in which they reside is likely to think poorly of their general.

Caravans, Trade and the Guild

Separated (if not entirely divorced) from caste, clan and culture, mortals who travel with caravans have unique opportunities to see Creation. Most caravans travel consistent routes repeatedly between two termini and have habitual way stations. Guards, merchants and accountants alike become familiar with likely ambush points and the traders and goods they are likely to encounter along the way. They build networks of relationships and communities that last for years, if not decades.

Yet, heroes with a spark of destiny rarely stay with one caravan for very long. Their talents and spectacular abilities make them desirable for short-term employment along multiple routes, and their love of adventure often leads them off the safer paths onto riskier routes where they have greater chance for wealth and glory. Therefore, while the Children of Earth might stick to the same hundred-mile route for most of their lives, a hero could easily jump from caravan to caravan and ride the whole overland route from Whitewall to Gem—a journey of many years, and utterly unrepeatable.

The Kin of the Dragons

Most often, true power among the Blessed Isle's heroic mortals belongs to those who are kin to the Terrestrial Exalted. The mortal members of the Great Houses wield tremendous influence over the prefectures and cities of the empire. They do the real work of running the Realm by crewing the ships of the five fleets, making up the lower ranks of the officer corps in the Imperial Army,

filling out and delivering the paperwork of the Thousand Scales and managing the logistics of empire. The Dragon-Blooded can shout slogans and march in parades all they like, but it is mortals who actually organize the parades and manage the human crews to launch the confetti bombs.

Many mortals of high status in the Realm loathe the Exalted as a group, because the Exalted strip away so much potential for personal achievement. Lacking access to Essence confers certain disadvantages upon mortals in a world where the best weapons and tools require the ability to manipulate it. Accordingly, many must rely upon other means of accomplishing complex goals. They use the lands and markets of the empire to acquire wealth, they build bureaucratic strongholds to achieve goals, and they construct palaces, far from any manse, in which to live lives of ease. In these ways, a mortal lord can build a sense of personal accomplishment, and can rival or obstruct a Dragon-Blood or two as needed.

What mortals cannot avoid are Dynastic obligations. The leaders of the Great Houses care greatly that the proper marriages occur in the proper sequence and that the children of these marriages show up in the right way at the right time. Even if the children fail to Exalt, the grandchildren or the great-grandchildren might. Once the order is given that a mortal must marry a certain Exalt, the un-Exalted Dynast is trapped. Most go to their weddings with a sense of resignation, though a few approach them with love and respect. True followers of the Immaculate Philosophy are rare among mortal Dynasts, who often must give up private lovers or even harems for the sake of a Dragon-Blooded consort.

Adventure Seeds: The Realm

The Realm is a reasonably good place for mortal adventures, provided that you downplay the presence of the Dragon-Blooded except as patrons or leaders of enemy factions rather than as chief adversaries.

- Immaculate monks must patrol a region and keep a vicious criminal gang in check while their Exalted patron is away.
- A special ops team for a Dragon-Blooded prefect tries to keep the region safe from predation by refugees and the other Great Houses.
- A group of refugee leaders tries to find a safe haven for the demoralized rabble that follows them.
- Archons of one of the few surviving magistrates try to help their lord carry out his duties while also keeping him safe.

The Scales and the Monks

Among the bureaucrats of the Realm, and in the Immaculate Order, mortals greatly outnumber the Terrestrial Exalted. Yet, chains of command and hierarchies of obedience place very specific and real demands upon mortal attention and action. The archons of a magistrate of the Realm live to serve their mistress and do her bidding with an eagerness born of a combination of deep devotion and deliberate, Essence-driven manipulation of their loyalty. The proselytes of a vartabed of the Order chant hymns, day in and day out, praising the awesome necessity of obeying their Dragon-Blooded mentor until death. These are no more capable of disobedience than a custodian of Autochthon.

Yet, their loyalty and constraint of their action does not overly harness their minds. Immaculate monks and bureaucrats are both capable of rational thought and cunning scheming. Most recognize that the Thousand Scales or the Order have brought them most of the good and glorious things in their lives. They will fight, plan, scheme, connive and conspire in order to further and extend its goals, laws and authority.

Life in the North

Humans in the icy lands of the North face more severe environmental pressures than elsewhere. Finding and storing up food for the winter occupies many people's time. Because of this, though, mortals typically have a freer hand in managing their own affairs in the North, since Exalts who can leave for warmer climates and more sybaritic lifestyles usually do so. The one great exception to this rule is the Bull of the North and his retinue. The Anathema leader and his circle constitute a significant threat to many communities, and they must always take into account his plans and actions in determining their own safety.

The League

Among all the cultures of Creation, the Haslanti League is the most accepting of the idea that mortals are suitable candidates for rulership even if an Exalt is available. Mortals repair, crew and command the ships of the famed Air Fleet and Ice Squadron. They rule the towns of the League in both greenfields and emeralds, they manage the re-supply of far-flung settlements, and they fight battles against raiders on the periphery. An Exalt might do the job better than a mortal, but will she be there when you really need her? Being pragmatic, the League and its attendant states relies heavily upon training and practice to beef up its agents as competent to stand against any threat, even the Exalted, in large enough numbers.

Not everything is easy for mortals in the League, of course, and they do not always present a united front to

Creation. First, the city-states are technically independent of each other and prone to rivalry. Most cities operate spy cells in one another's territories unofficially, gathering information on business, crime and political affiliations. Criminal gangs maintain local organizations as well as regional ones, and bandits often attack caravan trade routes while pirates attack ice vessels. Only the air boat routes are free from mortal interference. Here, though, the crews are specially trained to deal with spirits, gods and demons, either through appeasement or neutralization.

Since dueling is an accepted practice in the League as well, most mortals must be prepared to deal with their rivals or opponents on a moment's notice, accepting death as the penalty for failure. This makes for some dramatic moments in the life of a typical Haslanti.

Whitewall and Gethamane

The League is not the only power in the North, of course. Whitewall and Gethamane have their own attitudes toward outsiders and toward mortals, and both cities are at tremendous risks from forces below, within and around their communities. These forces are easily capable of overwhelming the typical mortal, body and soul. The two nations are hardly safe places even for heroes unless players and Storyteller are content on ending their series with unalloyed horror.

Even so, there are opportunities for storytelling here. Whitewall is very much in need of rebuilding and reform, while Gethamane's disturbing history lends itself well to investigation and desperate battles in the darkness. Both are close enough to each other, to the forces of chaos, to the League and to the Realm, to make for some excellent storytelling centered around diplomacy, espionage and intrigue.

Among the Barbarians

Among the barbarian tribes of the Northeast, there are also opportunities for storytelling not well served elsewhere. Heroes in this part of the world are likely fighting against both the Bull of the North and the environment. They are probably caught in the age-old tangle between neophilia and tradition. Stories here revolve around lineage and age set, and what happens when those familiar patterns are disrupted.

Barbarian clans respect and honor Exalted among themselves—sometimes. Most often, they drive away Solars and accept Lunars as leaders. Dragon-Blooded are accepted or driven out or destroyed, depending entirely on the clan's prior experiences with the Realm or its tributaries. Barbarian warlords love having the power of an Exalt or God-Blood at their side in battle but they fear being replaced by a rising power at their

Adventure Seeds: The North

Heroic adventures in the North can end a lot like the tales of H. P. Lovecraft, with everyone mad or dead, or they can conclude more like *Beowulf*, where the hero dies with honor after achieving great things for his people and himself. The Storyteller has a lot of options, including the following:

- A warrior rises to leadership of his clan and tribe.
- A tribe must decide whether to join the Bull of the North or stand on its own.
- A criminal steals a shipment of goods intended for the League military.
- A savant finds a library of materials related to building skyships.
- A group of Undertown workers in Whitewall fights a series of nameless horrors successfully… at first.

hall's table or in the tribe's counsels. A mortal hero in this setting has to worry about not only beating enemies in battle, but also dodging the long knives in the dark of his own homestead.

Life in the East

For the men and women of the Eastern cities, life is not exactly easy, but there is a degree of hustle and flow rarely found elsewhere. In Sijan, the city of tombs, there are always the dead to care for. In Nexus, there is always the next deal or the next con. In Lookshy, there is the next battle and the intrigue that leads up to it. In Great Forks and Greyfalls, there is the next season of trading. On the heights of Mount Metagalapa, there is the next raid to plan and the next council to wrangle.

Farther south, in the shadow of Thorns, life is more tenuous in all senses of the word. Yet, mortal heroes have done more against the Deathlord and his grip on that city that most of the Exalts and gods combined. They have little left to lose in their fight against the undying ruler of their homeland. The only thing that truly disheartens them is to see their former comrades rise up as the undead servants (or worse) of their enemy.

Along the Rivers

The River Province and its city-states new and old are probably the most fruitful ground for mortal heroes in all Creation. There are fortunes to be won and lost, ancient caches of First Age technology, lucrative opportunities for trade in finished goods, and above all, so many Exalted running loose that it is possible to escape their notice.

Mortals and mortal heroes rule along the rivers. They control the towns and captain the ships. They man the forts and pilot the pirate barges. For every Dragon-Blood or Solar Anathema, there are 10,000 mortals, and every one of them is angling for something: tonight's dinner, next week's big deal, next year's newest fortune. Some believe that what they need or want can be found in the train and company of an Exalt, but many more choose to go it alone or work with friends or families to achieve their desires.

Collectively, River Province folk have much working in their favor. They have a broad range of manufactories available to them and a wide selection of foods and raw materials. The population is dense along the rivers, with numerous cities of 10,000 people or more, and hundreds of towns. It is possible to raise armies in the Scavenger Lands and feed them. It is also possible to make fortunes here, and to lose them just as easily.

Nexus and Great Forks

Mortals in Nexus and Great Forks are some of the freest and most ambitious humans in the world. With access to the luxuries and basic produce of Creation, they have the potential to live lives of great extravagance. Yet, many live in squalid poverty, unable or unwilling to amount to more. The dysfunctional governments of these principalities are highly inefficient or are deliberately unequal.

Still, many who live here have opportunities far beyond those of an ordinary mortal elsewhere. Both cities are large enough to support several criminal syndicates, each preying on a different aspect of the city's trade or manufacturing. Both cities contain several schools and colleges, for teaching everything from basic accounting to the sword. Mercenary companies recruit orphans from the streets and contracts from city hall. Incense flows out of hundreds of temple doors. Any mortal hero who can't add to or alter the urban experience deserves a knife in the kidney from a more enterprising fellow. In fact, they frequently get just that.

For the Exalted, these cities are recruiting grounds for followers, and only peripherally available to attack or to try to control. Individual heroes, families, lineages and more are tightly woven into these places. The mysterious Emissary and the Council of Entities make Nexus safe for mortal ambition, and the result is a city that flourishes without too much Exalted intervention.

In the Forests

While the population of the Eastern forests is considerably lower than in the Scavenger Lands themselves, there are still many more mortals than there are Exalts of any kind. The endless Halta-Linowan conflict is fought with mortal soldiers, and the tribes of the Far East leap from

tree to tree in search of medicinal bromeliads and hallucinogenic fungi. And farther south, a war brews between humans of a standard shape and the altered beastmen.

In the forests of the Far East, there is little apparent distinction between the aware, alert mortal and the typical Exalt from the cities. A Dragon-Blood has little knowledge of the poisonous plants and other dangers of the jungle. She is at great risk of death or dismemberment every time she strays from the paths chosen by knowledgeable guides. Her stamina, strength and endurance protect her, but they do not always guide her well to avoid such issues. The knowledgeable mortal has no chance to survive the horrors that can destroy one of the Princes of the Earth, but he has greater knowledge of his surroundings and can avoid many of the land's dangers and pitfalls.

Adventure Seeds: The East

Mortals in the East are capable of being tribesmen living in sustainable permaculture villages ensconced in the jungle, scavenger lords picking over First Age ruins in the vicinity of Denandsor or ship captains on the region's great rivers. Adventures can go to some wild places in this part of Creation. To wit:

- A company of Lookshy rangers faces off against the newly forming shadowlands on the frontiers of Thorns.
- A scavenger lord hires a team of bodyguards to help unearth an ancient library.
- A warrior travels village to village competing in wrestling tournaments and seeking to right injustices
- A team of mercenaries working for the Council of Entities patrols the Yellow River, investigating claims of piracy.
- A tribal hunting party captures a newly Exalted Solar. What will they do with her?

Criminals here tend to be bandits who watch the more frequently traveled trails to rob peddlers. Priests and savants act as tribal shamans and witch doctors. Warriors are always in great abundance among peoples who kill and maim their rivals for sport.

Life in the South

The South has always seemed more decadent and more dangerous than the other directions to many visitors, but the truth is that mortal life is cheap everywhere. Even so, it is more obvious here. A peasant collapsing of heat stroke in the fields is likely to be ground up and ploughed under as fertilizer, without even traditional amenities such as a funeral. In pearl fisheries, deep mines and blisteringly hot rice paddies, mortals struggle to eke out a living from the land of fire.

In Harborhead, the Brides of Ahlat are nearly all mortals. Only a few of these terrifying warriors belong to the ranks of the God-Blooded or the Exalted. Humans populate the Realm's imperial garrison and bureaucracy, and the natives' councils of the Drums, far more than otherworldly agents do. The result is that human policy tends to be in the forefront of all decision making (once the opinion of the Bull God himself is taken into account).

Farther west, in Chiaroscuro and Paragon, mortals make up the bulk of these states' armies and bureaucracies. It is possible to run a mortal army without Charms or the prestige of an Exalted general, but it is tremendously difficult to maintain unit cohesion and morale in the face of such an advantaged enemy. In the same way, mortal bureaucracies tend toward venality, petty power games and corruption. They are as likely to be led by criminals as by savants.

Between the Southern Cities

The coastal lands of the South are heavily developed and settled. The network of towns and villages is thick, and true wilderness areas are rare. The Children of Earth are strong here, for the lawful and unlawful authorities alike frown on heroes. The Realm satrapies dislike mortal heroes doubly, for disobeying the will of the Empress and for contravening the Immaculate Philosophy by resisting Exalted rule. Nonetheless, criminal gangs and schools and societies flourish here, out of sight of the prying eyes of the Scarlet Empire's officials.

The villages and coastal towns between Yane and the Lap are joined by a road that, while built in the First Age, has not weathered the years quite as successfully as the road between Whitewall and the coast. Deeply rutted, often muddy and occasionally impassible, this route serves the poorer travelers and traders who cannot afford to ship goods by sea. Its gods and their wayside shrines are often run down, but banditry is kept at a minimum due to the regularity and frequency with which the villages contain schools for mortal martial arts. The courtyards of the "fighting tea rooms" along the road serve as an informal kick-boxing circuit for monks, travelers, students, masters and anyone intent on proving their skills who does not wish to go up against an Exalt. Hostels cater to the traveling fist-show, and clinics exist for patching up losers and winners alike. Each teahouse has its own house rules, as well as a feature or two in the courtyard that makes fighting there unique.

Among Nomads

Farther south, in the deep desert, the number of people drops off rapidly, and the tents shift places frequently

Adventure Seeds: The South

The deserts of the South make finding drinking water and food almost an adventure in themselves. Heroes who stay in the cities tend to focus more on issues of social justice and fairness in dealing with the slaveholders and serfs of these decadent pleasure-dens. Some story ideas include:

- Refugees from Gem decide to learn the truth of the mysterious Locust Crusaders.
- Sea captains from Chiaroscuro compete with each other to find new trade routes as the gods of the Inland Sea trade duties and areas of responsibilities in an upheaval of the Terrestrial Bureaucracy.
- Lion-Folk in the desert have destroyed the Exalted monster-hunter who came looking for them; now they're hunting his human support staff.
- Rebels and escaped slaves in the hills around Paragon decide to strike back against the corruption and luxury of their former masters.
- Immaculate monks near the Lap try to square the dichotomy between the incredible poverty of the people and the luxury of their elders.

in search of water and fodder for animal herds. Most mortal heroes are warriors here, with priests and savants alike often being called sachem or shaman or revered one. Criminals are rare indeed, for the desert folk honor taboo and custom that prohibits stealing from those who honor you with hospitality. Sharing water is tantamount to sharing life in this part of the world. You cannot steal from one who offered you life. Along the desert fringes, where the merchants travel, bandits and con artists alike tend to succeed more readily.

Life in the West

Compass and quadrant yield their secrets to mortals as readily as to the Exalted. Common sailors and captains alike have never drawn the Second Breath and joined the ranks of the Dragon-Blooded or the Celestial Exalted. The sea is full of ships of every make and every island, and their crews are far more often mortal than not. Pearl fishers and clam divers alike are mortal, yet lead adventurous lives indeed—fighting off pirates and fending off sharks (or worse) in the deep. The pirates, too, are often mortal and prey on mortal shipping and mortal towns for slaves and wealth. Mortals watch the skies and predict the weather, cast nets for fish and gut clumsy cutpurses in dark alleyways behind drinking halls in the roughest harbor towns in the world.

Island Folk

The islanders of the West dream of escape. It is difficult to live one's life forever among islands where all things remain the same, always. Mortals here are tied into a web of families and lineages far more tightly than anywhere else, and many are actively discouraged from becoming heroes, as the Western Children of Earth have far too much to do just to keep society from unraveling. There are tubers to pluck from the earth and peel, fish to hunt in the reefs and all manner of shellfish to gather. The life of a hero is unsuited to such lives.

Even so, there are heroes. Merchants run their tables in the market square under brightly colored awnings. Gladiators spar for strings of polished cowries under the hot sun. Savants examine the color of urine in elegant glass bottles to determine the cause of diseases and the appropriate cures. Hierophants consummate annual marriages to the sea, to assure prosperity and good fortune. Hermits seek out rocky islets to study in solitude the nature of Creation and their own spirits. Such men and women are often looked sought to solve the problems and trials of life on earth in the midst of the vast depths of the sea.

Among Seafarers

It is not uncommon for sailors to spend much of their lives crewing the same route, but the nature of the ocean is such that few stay on the same ship all that time. Most vessels except First Age relics fall apart or rot within a decade of first entering the water. Many more run aground because of reefs, rocks or the anger of a little god. Ships must be replaced, and sailors find new berths regularly. Warriors, merchants, savants and criminals all have ways to live well onboard ship, sailing from port to port and island to island.

Adventure Seeds: The West

The West's open waters and lonely islands make a fine place for telling stories of brave and resourceful humans.

- Seafaring pirates decide to attack and capture the wrong ship.
- A savant decides to find whether rumors of an undersea city are true.
- An arranged marriage might be able to end decades of feuding between two islands—if the priest can keep the bride's and groom's families from murdering them first.
- Warriors compete for the honor of being the first swordsman in the archipelago. When prizes are this valuable, though, some resort to foul play.

THIS IS HER, EH? LOOKS HEALTHY. GOOD, GOOD.
SHE'S A GOOD GIRL. HER NAME IS—
HER NAME? YOU'RE SELLING HER!
HER NAME MIGHT AS WELL BE KOKU OR DINARS OR JADE TO YOU.
HERE, TAKE YOUR MONEY. THAT'S WHAT YOU CARE ABOUT.
GIVE THAT CHILD BACK TO HER MOTHER. NOW.
I KNOW THAT VOICE! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD! THEY SAID YOU DIED!
THIS IS YOUR LAST WARNING, SALMALIN SCUM. FIVE... FOUR... THREE...
SilPeng Lee

CHAPTER TWO
CHARACTER CREATION AND TRAITS

In all of Creation, there are but 700 Celestial Exalted of any sort. The Dragon-Blooded vastly outnumber them but are themselves only a few ten thousand strong. For every Exalt who walks Creation, there are thousands of mortals, enough to drown the Princes of the Earth in sheer numbers if their potential could be harnessed. Not that anyone has truly sought to fulfill the potential of humanity since the Great Contagion. To a cynical observer in the Age of Sorrows, the Solars seem to care about mortals only as potential followers, the Dragon-Blooded view them as worthless vassals, and the Abyssals regard them as simply future corpses. Even among the two Exalted groups with perhaps the most interest in humanity, the Lunars often see mortals as simply fodder for social engineering experiments, while the Sidereals most often forge them into acquaintances to pass away the monotony of centuries hounded by their Arcane Fate. Even most gods are inclined to see little worth in humanity save as fonts of Essence. There are individual exceptions, of course, but the great powers of Creation usually deem the human race as irrelevant save as potential hosts for Exaltation.

But humanity can be so much more. True, the great teeming masses of mortals who toil in poverty and ignorance across Creation would seem to belie that prediction, but some exceptional mortals transcend the limitations placed on them by their so-called betters. Touched by destiny and blessed with the drive to achieve, such mortals have the audacity to reach for a status greater than mere lackey or slave. They strive to become heroes.

This chapter explains the rules for creating heroic mortal characters, expanding on the rules outlined on page 81 of **Exalted.** Such characters may be created as a prelude to an eventual Exaltation or may actually be the stars of an all-mortal series. Regardless, each heroic mortal carries within her a seed of potential that needs only the water of adversity to blossom into greatness. Although they are not heirs to the blessings of the gods in the form of awe-inspiring magical powers, heroic mortals can still achieve a great deal—far more than any Exalt, deity, demon or ghost might ever imagine.

You might not be an Exalt, but you are still a hero. What tales will they tell of *your* deeds?

Heroic Mortal Character Creation

Step One: Character Concept

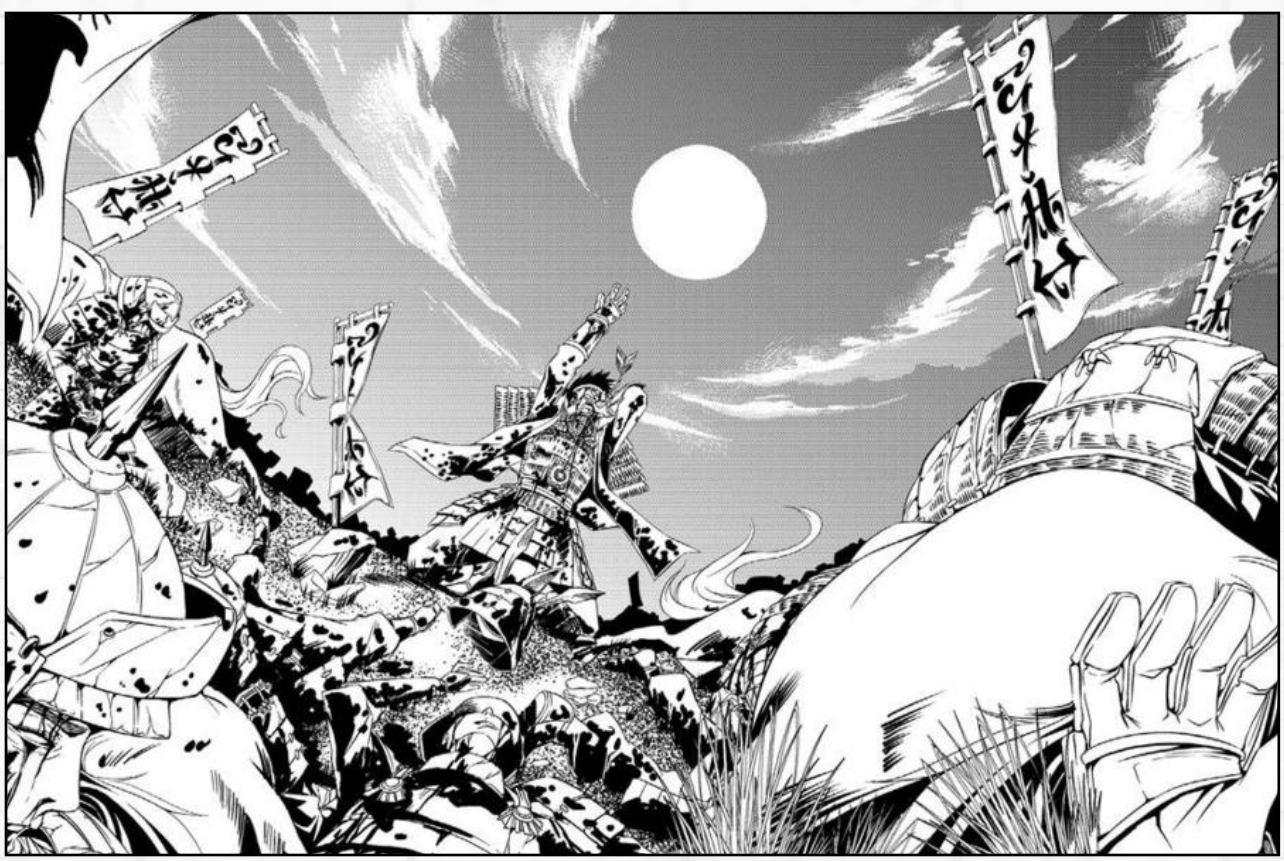
The first step in creating a heroic mortal is to choose a character concept. Decide who your character is and what he's doing with his life. Ask yourself these questions: What is your character's name? Where does he come from? What has his life been like? Is he cunning or brutish? Belligerent or charming? A mighty warrior or a bookish archeologist? What are his views on the Dragon-Blooded? The gods? The Anathema?

Archetypes and Professions

Unlike Exalted, heroic mortals have neither castes nor aspects. All heroic mortals, however, can be fit into one of five general archetypes that roughly correspond to the Solar castes: warriors, priests, savants, criminals and brokers. Warriors include soldiers, mercenaries, gladiators, assassins, hunters and anyone else who makes a living through skill at arms. Priests are holy men and women, shamans, cult leaders and anyone else who serves as a religious figure. Savants include scribes, thaumaturges, physicians, archeologists and anyone else who makes a living through applied knowledge. Criminals include everyone from ruthless assassins and thieves to roguish pickpockets, wandering circus performers, street musicians and homeless vagrants, as well as anyone else who makes their way through the underbelly of society. Finally, brokers are couriers, diplomats, businessmen, nobles and adventurers, and they include anyone who makes their living through skilled social interaction.

Each of these archetypes (which are described more fully beginning on p. 35) lists several professions associated with it. For example, gladiator is one of the professions associated with the warrior archetype. Each profession grants the character bonus dots in Abilities chosen from a list associated with the profession, provided the character meets all the requirements for membership in that profession

Of course, it is possible to conceive of a character concept that does not neatly fit into any of the listed archetypes or professions. A wily prostitute might arguably be viewed as either a criminal or a broker, while the war priest of a bloodthirsty militant religion might be viewed as a warrior, a priest or even something else. The archetypes and professions listed in this chapter are simply a shorthand way to describe certain common character tropes so as to facilitate establishing the character's concept, so don't worry too much if your character concept doesn't neatly fit into a professional box. If none of the listed professions or archetypes seems appropriate, talk to your Storyteller about setting up rules for an alternative profession.



Motivation and Intimacies

Next, you must select a Motivation for your character. Motivations function for heroic mortals just as they do for Exalted (see **Exalted**, pp. 88–89). Yet, the Motivation of a heroic mortal, while still usually epic in scope, is rarely as grandiose as that of an Exalt. A heroic mortal might desire to become a conquering warlord, but only a delusional one would ever seriously think that she might one day conquer all of Creation. Among Solar Exalts, such dreams of world domination represent perhaps the most common Motivation, at least among younger Exalts who have not outgrown such banal goals.

Also, select starting Intimacies for your character. Intimacies function as they do for Exalted (see **Exalted**, p. 90), and your character begins with a number of starting Intimacies equal to her Compassion.

Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Heroic mortals get fewer starting Attributes than Exalted do. First, rank the three Attribute categories (Physical, Social and Mental) according to which is primary, secondary or tertiary. Then allocate six dots to the primary category, four to the secondary category and three to the tertiary category.

Step Three: Choosing Abilities

Heroic mortals receive a total of 25 dots to distribute among their Abilities. You cannot raise any Ability above three dots without spending bonus points. A character who chooses a profession from among the options listed under the various character archetypes, however, gains additional Ability dots that may potentially raise an Ability to 4. Each heroic mortal gets one Favored Ability and must allocate at least one dot to it. A heroic mortal may never have any non-Favored Ability rated higher than his Favored Ability.

Step Four: Advantages

Backgrounds

A heroic mortal begins with five dots to allocate among Background points. Some of the standard Backgrounds are not available to heroic mortals or are limited in some way. The specific rules governing these differences are explained beginning on page 29. You cannot raise any of a heroic mortal's Backgrounds above three dots without spending bonus points.

Virtues

A heroic mortal has five dots to allocate among the four Virtues (in addition to the free dot in each Virtue the character already has). Virtues function for mortals just as they do for Exalted, but mortals do not suffer from any version of the Great Curse. Nor do they suffer any other adverse effect tied to their Virtues (except for any negative effects the player imposes on her character through some of the Flaws found in Chapter Three).

Essence

A heroic mortal begins with a permanent Essence of 1, but most mortals have neither a Personal nor Peripheral Essence pool nor any way to directly channel the Essence within them. A heroic mortal must possess the Awakened Essence Merit (see p. 59) to become an Essence wielder. Such a blessed individual gains an Essence pool equal to (permanent Essence x 10). The character may thereafter channel Essence for such powers as supernatural martial arts, thaumaturgy, sorcery or necromancy, or even acquired Charms.

Any Essence-wielding mortal can increase her starting Essence at a cost of 10 bonus points per dot, up to a maximum of Essence 3, which represents the absolute limit of human potential. After character creation, an Essence-wielding mortal can increase her Essence with Experience at a cost of (rating x 20). A heroic mortal can reach Essence 4 only if a deity elevates him to godhood, if a demon invests him as an akuma or endows him as a Demon-Blood or if he Exalts.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

A heroic mortal's Willpower is equal to the sum of her two highest Virtues. She has health levels as follows: -0, -1, -1, -2, -2, -4, Incapacitated. Finally, each heroic mortal begins with 21 bonus points to spend as the player wishes, as well as up to 10 additional bonus points gained through Flaws (as described in Chapter Three). This cap may be modified by the Esoteric Knowledge Background found on pages 33-34.

Character Creation Summary

• Step One: Character Concept

Determine your character's concept.

Choose Motivation, archetype and profession.

If none of the existing archetypes and professions fit your character concept, discuss creating a new archetype and/or profession with your Storyteller.

• Step Two: Choose Attributes

Note that all Attributes start with one dot before you add any.

Prioritize the three categories: Physical (Strength, Dexterity and Stamina), Social (Charisma, Manipulation and Appearance) and Mental (Perception, Intelligence and Wits).

Divide six dots among your primary Attributes, four among your secondary Attributes and three among your tertiary Attributes.

• Step Three: Choose Abilities

Choose one Favored Ability. Divide up 25 dots among your Abilities, then add any additional dots gained from a profession. No non-Favored Ability can exceed the Favored Ability, and no Ability can exceed three dots without spending bonus points *unless* the fourth dot comes from a profession.

• Step Four: Choose Advantages

Choose Backgrounds (5—none may exceed 3 without spending bonus points, and each dot above 3 costs two bonus points). Assign Virtues (5, plus one free dot in each Virtue—none may be higher than 4 without spending bonus points).

• Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Essence (1), Willpower (sum of two highest Virtues—may not start higher than 8 unless at last two Virtues are 4 or higher) and health levels (7). Choose up to 10 points in Flaws.

• Bonus Points

Spend 21 bonus points, plus any additional bonus points gained from Flaws, at any point during character creation.

Archetypes and Professions

• **Warrior**—One who lives and dies by his skill at arms. Professions include gladiator, guard, soldier, thug or warlord.

• **Priest**—One who acts as a religious leader or as an intermediary between mortals and higher powers. Professions include hermit, hierophant, mendicant, monk or shaman.

• **Savant**—One who seeks knowledge and understanding, whether for enlightenment or in pursuit of personal power. Professions include craftmason, physician, scavenger lord, scholar or thaumaturge.

• **Criminal**—One who makes her way through the seamy underbelly of Creation. Professions include assassin, gambler, master thief, racketeer or scam artist.

• **Broker**—One who facilitates social or business interactions. Professions include courier, diplomat, merchant, noble or spy.

Backgrounds

• **Allies**—Friends and associates who help in tasks.

• **Artifact—**Magical devices, often dating from the First Age.

• **Backing—**Standing and status in an organization of power.

• **Command**—Authority over a military unit.

• **Contacts—**Sources of information and conveniently placed friends.

• **Destiny**—A powerful fate written in the stars.

• **Esoteric Knowledge—**Supernatural understanding and benefits acquired through either a lifetime of study or dangerous questing in the Wyld.

• **Face—**Status arising from your peerless martial arts.

• **Familiar**—An animal companion.

• **Followers**—Other mortals who look to you for guidance.

• **Henchmen**—Loyal and often ruthless agents who do your bidding.

• **Influence—**Your power over the mortal society around you.

• **Library—**A repository of arcane knowledge useful for research.

• **Manse**—A place of magical power over which you hold dominion.

• **Mentor**—An influential and powerful friend whose favor you have gained.

• **Patron—**An employer or simply a guardian who aids you in exchange for services rendered.

• **Resources**—Personal wealth.

• **Retainers**—Personal servants or slaves.

• **Sifu—**A teacher who can instruct you in Terrestrial martial arts.

• **Spies—**A network of espionage agents who feed you secrets.

Bonus Point Costs

Trait	Bonus Points
Attribute	4
Favored Ability	1
Non-Favored Ability	2
Background	1 (2 if the Background is being raised above 3)
Specialty	1 (2 per 1 if in a Favored Ability)
Virtue	3
Willpower	2
Essence*	10
Merit	listed cost

* The character must have an appropriate Merit in order to raise his Essence to 2 and cannot raise his Essence above 3.

Note: The possibility of purchasing Merits or buying off Flaws with experience is discussed in Chapter Three beginning on page 48.

Mortal Traits

In general, most traits function the same way for heroic mortal characters as they do for the Exalted. There are certain exceptions and clarifications, however, and this section is devoted to outlining them for both players and Storytellers.

Abilities for Mortals

Abilities function for heroic mortals just as they do for Exalted with one exception. Although a heroic mortal can possess any of the five Craft Abilities listed on page 107 of **Exalted**, she may never learn any other Craft Ability [such as the Craft (Glamour) Ability used by the Fair Folk or the Craft (Fate) Ability of the Sidereal Exalted] unless she also possesses the Esoteric Craft Merit described on page 53.

Altered Backgrounds

The following preexisting Backgrounds are available to heroic mortals. Except where noted, each Background may be found in **Exalted** and functions identically to its description there. Some Backgrounds found in other supplements are Exalted-specific and are not available to heroic mortals unless specifically allowed by a Storyteller for some special plot-related reason. They include:

- From **Exalted**—Cult.
- From **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Dragon-Blooded**—Arsenal, Breeding, Connections and Family.
- From **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars**—Heart's Blood, Solar Bond, Taboo and Tattoo Artifact.
- From **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Sidereals**—Acquaintances, Celestial Manse, Savant and Salary. As noted on page 33, heroic mortals may possess the Sifu Background, but for them, it functions somewhat differently.
- From **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Abyssals**—Abyssal Command, Liege, Underworld Manse and Whispers.
- From **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals—**Familiar (Demonic), Infernal Manse, Past Life and Savant.
- From **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Alchemicals—**Charms, Eidolon, Familiar (Autochthonian).

Allies (see **Exalted,** pp. 110–111)

A one-dot ally is most likely another heroic mortal, with additional points applied to this Background representing progressively more powerful or influential heroic mortals. The significant power differential between Exalts and heroic mortals makes the former more appropriate as a mentor or patron rather than an ally. At most, a five-dot ally might be a relatively weak Dragon-Blood, but only with Storyteller approval.

Artifact (see **Exalted,** p. 111)

Unless a heroic mortal has the power to channel and commit Essence, he can never attune to a weapon or to any other artifact with an Essence-commitment cost. For mortals capable of channeling Essence, Artifact functions normally.

Backing (see **Exalted,** p. 111)

This Background functions normally for heroic mortals.

Command (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Dragon-Blooded,** p. 106)

A heroic mortal with the Command Background holds a position of authority over a military unit. The source of this authority might come from family connections, personal wealth or actual rank in one of Creation's militaries. The availability of this Background may be conditional on the presence of other related Backgrounds. If the soldiers in the character's unit are loyal to him personally, the character must have a Resources rating *greater* than his Command rating in order to keep his troops properly outfitted and provisioned. If the unit is part of a larger fighting force in which the character merely holds command rank, he need not pay for his troops personally. Yet, neither will he be able to order them to act in ways contrary to the military objectives of his superiors (at least, not without risking the loss of this Background). Such a character has greater freedom to use his forces as he wishes if his rating in either the Backing or Influence Background is *greater* than his Command rating. Such an influential mortal can circumvent the chain of command if necessary.

It is rare for a unit under the control of a heroic mortal to have a Might rating higher than 1, unless the character's concept gives her access to gunzosha or ashigaru armor or similarly impressive hardware. Yet, magical beings take orders from a mere mortal only in very exceptional circumstances. By default, the soldiers provided by this Background are elite soldiers. If they are untrained extras, use the traits for followers instead.

- • About 25 elite soldiers.
- •• About 125 elite soldiers.
- ••• About 250 elite soldiers.
- •••• About 500 elite soldiers.
- ••••• At least 5,000 soldiers.

Contacts (see **Exalted,** p. 111)

This Background functions normally for heroic mortals.

Destiny (Originally published in **Scroll of the Monk** on pp. 151–152)

Any person can change the world through great talent and hard work, but most people don't. Many fail when they try. Some force of fate clings to people with this Background, however, to enmesh them in events that affect the lives of others. Yet this force is blind to good and evil. The tyrant who claws his way to power and turns a nation into one vast scream carries a destiny as mighty as the hero who leads the uprising against him. The force of destiny might work to keep a fated individual alive until she can fulfill her role, but it seldom grants happiness or contentment. If anything,

powerful destinies tend to ruin lives as they drive their bearers to their fated ends.

Taking this Background indicates that a character has a specific fate in store, which the player and Storyteller should work together to create. (A brave player can leave the matter entirely in the Storyteller's hands, though, learning the character's destiny along with the character.) Astrologers can tell that a character has a destiny and give some idea of its strength, but a common horoscope won't say what the destiny is.

Players can roll the character's Destiny to create lucky breaks or coincidences. "Luck" is a relative term, though (and also a distinct Merit in its own right—see p. 60). For instance, a person with a destiny whose ship sank could be rescued before he dies of exposure… or he could be "rescued" by pirates who then sell him into slavery. But even this rough treatment could send the character where he needs to go. The more successes a player rolls, the luckier (and more improbable) the coincidence will be. A player can also add a number of dice equal to his Destiny to the pool for a critical task, such as figuring out how to operate a First Age device before the loathsome wrigglies attack or throwing a knife to kill the courtier who knows the character's treacherous schemes. The character can also use Destiny to improve DV. The player must roll one die for each point of Destiny, with each success increasing DV by one. Since a player can invoke Destiny only once per scene, however—and then only when the Storyteller agrees the task is critical to the character's survival or advancing to her fate—this Background is usually not much good in open combat. In most cases, a player would be better off rolling for some lucky break to change the circumstances of a fight than to apply Destiny as a bonus to attack or defense for a singe action.

Only mortals, God-Bloods and Terrestrial Exalted can take this Background. The higher sorts of Chosen make their own fates, and other people have destinies to interact with them. For most people, destiny is set at birth. A few unusual circumstances, however, can grant characters a destiny in the course of play instead of during character creation. Heroic mortal martial artists may possess destinies. In learning supernatural martial arts, they declare their intent—their need—to step beyond ordinary life and ordinary fates. Such a destiny can lead a martial artist to repeated encounters with the Exalted as opponents, allies or other important roles in their lives.

- You'll live a life slightly greater than usual, perhaps as a local hero or villain or the sidekick to a more powerful figure. At some point, your actions will affect at least a town's worth of people. Small coincidences happen in your life, such as meeting a person who gives you useful information.
- •• Your life can affect a province or small nation, and your deeds will be regional gossip for years to come.

You know you're luckier than most people, even if that luck is all bad.

••• Your deeds influence a kingdom, for better or worse, and you'll definitely win a place in chronicles or local legends. Unlikely coincidences often help or hinder you. People quickly see you don't live an ordinary life. Some people stay close to you for that reason. Others stay away.

•••• Your choices affect a significant part of Creation for decades to come. You might found a kingdom or destroy one. It seems nothing can kill you or avert your destiny, even if you wish it would. Bad things often happen to people you love—usually when their deaths become more useful to your destiny than their lives. Your life is often entangled with other people who have prominent destinies.

••••• One way or another, the fate of the world is in your hands. Your life is full of astounding luck and heartbreaking tragedy as your destiny relentlessly drives you toward your place in history. The Empress certainly had Destiny 5 (and it might not be over yet).

Face (Originally published in Scroll of the Monk on pp. 152–153)

Prerequisites: The character must have Martial Arts 3+ in order to possess this Background.

In the Martial Arts World, fighters seek fame as paragons of fighting prowess or of some ideal espoused by their school. A sifu might be famed for insightful training methods or generosity in accepting indigent pupils. A fighter who frequently competes in tournaments could be revered for good sportsmanship as well as his victories. Face represents how well a martial artist has become known to, and respected by, other martial artists.

Face does not necessarily represent a character's raw power. In the Realm, for instance, everyone knows that Immaculate monks wield far greater power than other martial artists. Nevertheless, most Immaculates lack this Background because they are not famous as individuals. The powerful martial artists among the Lunar Exalted are also little known outside their own kind, giving them little face in the Martial Arts World. Martial artist characters can begin play with Face if they were already known for their combat prowess as mortals, or if they studied under a famous sifu. Most of the time, however, characters gain Face in the course of play. They can also lose Face, of course, if they suffer humiliating defeats, show cowardice or otherwise bring dishonor upon themselves.

When two martial artists meet, compare their Face ratings, and subtract the lower score from the higher. The player of the character with greater Face gets to add that number of bonus dice to all social rolls made against the opposing martial artist. Yet, Face applies only when both characters see themselves as part of the Martial Arts World and acknowledge the importance of their reputation within it. For example, a great but mortal sifu won't impress one of Luna's Chosen who feels contempt for all civilization and knows he could eat the sifu for lunch. The Storyteller can also reduce a character's effective Face if she travels, since news spreads slowly in the Age of Sorrows. One character might acknowledge another martial artist's Face only after seeing her fight and recognizing her skill or who must have trained her.

Note: Although normally associated with the Martial Arts World, a player can purchase Face appropriate to some other milieu with the Storyteller's permission. For example, gladiators often recognize one another by reputation, as do famous assassins or other criminals. Ultimately, Face represents the measure of one's reputation within one's chosen field, but for narrative reasons, it is most commonly associated with martial artists.

• **Noticed:** Other martial artists have seen you earn a few victories, or maybe you just have a revered teacher.

•• **Known:** You have a strong reputation in the Martial Arts World, at least locally. Other martial artists know you as a capable practitioner who should not be taken lightly. Your sifu is most likely proud to claim you as a student.

••• **Famous:** Your victories are known far and wide. Other martial artists challenge you to see if you are as skilled as stories say. Would-be martial artists might seek instruction from you. You could open your own dojo.

•••• **Revered:** Impeccable technique and numerous victories make you known throughout Creation, at least among connoisseurs of combat. Other martial artists consider you one of the greatest living practitioners of your fighting style.

••••• **Legendary:** Only the greatest or most hotheaded martial artists dare to test your prowess. Students constantly seek your tutelage, and you have successfully trained several of them. You are known as one of the all-time greatest practitioners of your fighting style—perhaps you even created a powerful style of your own. Even the Sidereal Exalted speak your name with respect. Anyone who studies under you receives +1 bonus to his Face because of it.

Familiar (see Exalted, p. 112)

Unless a heroic mortal has the power to channel and commit Essence, he cannot recover additional Essence from a familiar. Otherwise, this Background functions normally.

Followers (see Exalted, p. 112)

This Background functions normally for heroic mortals except that a heroic mortal character, lacking the personal magnetism of an Exalt, must usually have either Backing,

Influence or Resources at a level equal to her Followers rating in order to maintain her followers' loyalty. Extremely charismatic mortals can overcome this requirement, however. Compare the heroic mortal's (Charisma + Performance) to her (Followers x 2). For every point by which the former total exceeds the latter, reduce the Backing/Influence/Resources requirement by one, to a minimum of zero. For example, a cult leader with Charisma 3, Performance 2 and Followers 2 would need Backing, Influence or Resources of only 1 instead of 2 in order to justify her Followers rating.

Henchmen (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Dragon-Blooded,** p. 110)

The heroic mortal has several mortal followers who are completely loyal to her and will obey her directions unless betrayed or treated very badly indeed. A military commander might consider his most ruthless adjutants as henchmen, while a crime boss might view his top leg breakers the same way. Generally, characters who possess henchmen use them for activities that are seedy at best and often overtly criminal. All henchmen are heroic mortals, although usually less powerful than the character to whom they have sworn loyalty.

Each henchman has an Intimacy of personal loyalty to the character to whom she is sworn. While this Intimacy can be degraded, it will never lessen solely because of any personal distaste for the character's actions or agenda.

•	One loyal henchmen.
••	Three loyal henchmen.
•••	Six loyal henchmen.
••••	10 loyal henchmen.
•••••	15 loyal henchmen.

Influence (see **Exalted,** pp. 112–113)

This Background functions normally for heroic mortals.

Manse (see **Exalted,** p. 113)

Unless a heroic mortal has the power to channel and commit Essence, she gains no particular benefit from possessing this Background and is most likely either a holy

Redundant Backgrounds

At first glance, some Backgrounds seem to overlap needlessly. For example, the Allies, Command, Followers, Henchmen and Retainers Backgrounds all basically provide the same benefit—people to aid the character in some capacity. The distinction between these Backgrounds is a subtle one that turns mainly on what that support can be called upon to do and how faithfully it will be provided.

Allies are friends or at least close associates of the character. Usually, each dot in Allies represents a single person of approximately the character's own power level. While the player may create a more powerful ally by allocating more dots to the Background, additional dots do not result in progressively higher numbers of allies, as would be the case with other similar Backgrounds.

Command provides for elite soldiers who will follow the character's orders in the context of battle. Although having a fighting force, if not an army, can be useful, it can also be expensive to maintain and potentially threatening to rivals. The personnel represented by this Background are always soldiers and have little non-combatant utility. In fact, soldiers under the character's command might actively disapprove of being ordered to perform tasks inappropriate to military personnel. The character must have a Resources, Backing or Influence rating equal to his Command +1 in order to have complete discretion in ordering his troops into battle. Otherwise, the character will have to answer to superiors for unwise applications of military force.

Followers provides a larger number of extras who are devoted to the character but who generally lack actual fighting prowess and are never of quality equal to elite soldiers. They can do many things that soldiers under the character's command cannot, though, such as perform manual labor, spread the character's reputation or simply worship the character faithfully (performing the same role as cult members for mortals who cannot benefit from a true Cult rating). At the lowest level, followers are little more than an entourage of hangers-on. At its highest level, this Background might represent a small kingdom at least nominally loyal to the character.

Henchmen are fewer in number in comparison to followers or a command, but each henchman is invariably a heroic mortal and is more valuable individually than the typical soldier or follower. Henchmen are best used as a personal gang, the crew of a ship or a private mercenary force on the character's payroll. Henchmen remain loyal unless events turn them against the character.

Retainers provide the smallest numeric benefit of these Backgrounds, and each retainer is individually a non-heroic mortal or, at best, the equivalent of an elite soldier. Retainers are *extremely* loyal to the character, however, and may be quite competent within a specific field. Retainers are best used as personal servants, household staff or even slaves. There is no requirement that a character have Backing, Influence or Resources at any particular level in order to justify having retainers, but if she has no dots in those Backgrounds, it is assumed that she has all of her resources tied up in maintaining her own personal staff rather than simply tending to her own needs.

person meditating in some ancient temple or a mere squatter occupying a decaying ruin until someone more powerful comes along.

Mentor (see **Exalted**, p. 113)

This Background functions normally for heroic mortals.

Resources (see **Exalted**, pp. 113–114)

This Background functions normally for heroic mortals.

Retainers (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Dragon-Blooded**, p. 111).

The heroic mortal has a small number of servants. Although not combat ready like the soldiers provided through Command or the lackeys provided by Henchmen, nor as numerous as the throngs provided by Followers, the benefits of the Retainers Background are still useful. Each dot provides for a number of personal servants who can perform menial tasks, provide personal service or operate businesses on the character's behalf.

Sifu (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Sidereals**, p. 107)

Prerequisites: Martial Arts 5, Essence 3

Your character studies under a martial arts master who can introduce him into the esoteric world of enlightened martial arts. While many Sidereal Exalted also possess this Background, the version available to heroic mortals is, understandably, inferior. In order to gain any benefit from having a sifu, the character must first be capable of learning a Terrestrial martial arts style. That is, he must be capable of wielding Essence, and he must have mastered the Root of the Perfected Lotus.

A heroic mortal is limited to Terrestrial martial arts and can never learn Celestial martial arts, let alone Sidereal ones, without achieving a higher state of being (whether that involves becoming a god, akuma or Exalt). As with the Sidereal version of Sifu, this Background provides the character with an instructor who knows and can teach one or more martial arts styles. With the mortal version, all of these styles are assumed to be Terrestrial ones. Theoretically, a heroic mortal's sifu might know Celestial or even Sidereal styles but would never be able to teach them to the character, or in most cases, even allow the character to know that the sifu has knowledge of what might be termed forbidden "Anathema styles."

- • Your character's sifu knows one Terrestrial martial arts style.
- •• Your character's sifu knows two Terrestrial martial arts styles.
- ••• Your character's sifu knows three Terrestrial martial arts styles.
- •••• Your character's sifu knows five Terrestrial martial arts styles.
- ••••• Your character's sifu is unparalleled: he knows seven Terrestrial martial arts styles.

Spies (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Abyssals**, p. 99; also **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals**, p. 78)

In a world where gods and demigods walk the lands, mortals rarely get noticed. While regrettable in some ways, this anonymity is valuable in others, for mighty Exalts and powerful deities rarely pay attention to the mortals cowering at their feet—and so, they rarely notice how closely some of these mortals pay attention to them. A heroic mortal with this Background can learn secrets uncovered by a web of spies and informants. While the Contacts Background is superior for the general acquisition of knowledge, the Spies Background is better for ferreting out knowledge that has been hidden.

This Background represents the character's access to a spy network. The higher a character's rating is, the wider and more numerous are the areas where she knows the local agents and has authority to call on their services. Like contacts, spies do not endanger themselves for a character's sake. They simply provide information and minor support services such as a safe place to sleep and messages passed back to the character's employers.

- • Your character knows how to contact and use a few agents in a town or small kingdom.
- •• Your character has access to a spy network in two significant city-states in Creation.
- ••• Your character can call upon spy networks in three important nations or trans-national organizations such as the Guild.
- •••• Your character exploits a spy network that expands throughout an entire cardinal direction of Creation. Anywhere she goes in that region, she can find informants. (Naturally, this works best if it's the same region where the character usually acts.)
- ••••• Your character has complete access to a spy network spread across an entire cardinal direction in Creation, including thousands of casual informants and hundreds of full-time agents. The master's eyes are everywhere, and they tell her everything they see. All she needs to do is ask.

New Backgrounds

The following new Backgrounds are available for heroic mortals.

Esoteric Knowledge

Prerequisites: Heroic mortals only. A character's Esoteric Knowledge Background may never exceed the lesser of her Lore or Occult.

The character is an experienced thaumaturge, a gifted shaman, a wise monk or a wily scavenger lord. Regardless of

the source of her acumen, she knows far more about forgotten lore than any mortal character has any right to. Such forbidden knowledge often also carries a heavy price tag for a character, though. Some characters patiently acquire it through years or even decades of training and study. Others take the quicker or more dangerous path of vision-questing in the Wyld in pursuit of power gained through mutation. Regardless, the practical effect of this Background is to increase the maximum number of bonus points that can be obtained through taking Flaws and/or negative mutations (which together are normally capped at 10 bonus points).

Each dot taken in Esoteric Knowledge allows the player to gain up to five additional bonus points from Flaws and/or negative mutations. The additional bonus points acquired thus must be spent in one of the following areas: the Lore or Occult Abilities, thaumaturgical Arts, Storyteller-approved Supernatural Merits, positive mutations or improved Essence. Generally, Flaws acquired as a result of years of academic study or training will most often be associated with the effects of age (most often, Physical Flaws), while positive mutations should usually be paid for with negative mutations, but this is not a hard-and-fast rule. As long as the Storyteller approves, any Flaw or negative mutation may be used to represent the cost of acquiring Esoteric Knowledge.

Library

Prerequisites: Lore 2 or higher

Although printing is still widely practiced in the Age of Sorrows, books are a precious commodity far out of reach for most of the wretchedly poor underclass of Creation, even assuming such drudges could read. In a time when most mortals have never even seen a book, your character has a significant collection of research materials to aid her studies. Prized by savants of all types, a library is especially valuable to a thaumaturge. On the downside, a full-sized library is not simply something you can carry in your pocket. Your character must have a Resources rating equal to (Library – 1) in order to account for storage and maintenance of a personally owned library or Backing, Influence or Mentor equal to (Library – 2) to account for a library owned by others to which you have free access.

- • Your character has a small stash of rare books covering a wide variety of topics, albeit none in depth. Add one die to all Lore rolls when your character has an opportunity to research at the library.
- •• Your character's collection includes a number of advanced tomes, including obscure (and possibly illegal) texts pertaining to magic. Add one die to Lore and Occult rolls when the character has time to research.
- ••• Your character's library is quite large and impressive, providing a comprehensive base for research into many fields. Add two dice to Lore rolls and one to Occult rolls. Your character no longer has to double training time for self-taught improvement of Lore or Occult.
- •••• Your character's library is a match for the public libraries of large cities or major Immaculate monasteries. Add two dice to all Lore and Occult rolls.
- ••••• Your character's library is the envy of scholars across Creation and among the largest privately held collections in Creation. Add two dice to all Lore and Occult rolls and one die to *any* other Ability roll as long as the roll is based on research or study. Additionally, the cost of increasing any trait of a magical nature (Storyteller's discretion) decreases by one if the library is used during training.

Patron

A mentor is a respected teacher who gives guidance and assistance and expects little in return save for the respect of a loyal and devoted student. Unfortunately, mortal characters usually lack the obvious potential that makes such a generous investment of time and resources profitable… unless the character has something to give in return, such as loyalty and obedience. A patron serves many of the same functions as a mentor, but the character is under no illusions about the power disparity in the relationship. While a mentor is usually a friend, albeit a formidable one, a patron is more like an employer. Examples of patrons include Dragon-Blooded and even gods who need mortal servants for plausible deniability, crime lords who require loyal henchmen or even cult leaders who need worshipers. Having a patron provides slightly better benefits than having a mentor, but the tradeoff is that a patron demands more in exchange for her assistance and isn't shy about asking for it.

Once per session, the player can convert the character's Patron rating into dots in any of the following Backgrounds for a single long action: Allies, Backing, Command, Contacts, Followers, Henchmen, Influence, Mentor, Library, Reputation, Resources or Spies. In game, this action takes the form of simply asking one's patron for a favor, and the patron responding by putting some of her personal power at your disposal. The patron cannot give what she doesn't have, though. When this Background is first acquired, the player and Storyteller must determine who the patron is and what Backgrounds she actually has, and Patron dots cannot be converted into any Background rating higher than what the patron actually possesses. For example, if the patron has Command 3, then the character cannot make use of more than three dots of Command, no matter what his Patron rating is.

Whenever the character calls upon his patron, the patron has the right to ask for some suitable service in return. Unlike a mentor, who will typically have at least some sympathy for the character's plight, a patron might be ruthless in her demands, demanding cash or major favors

for her assistance. This does not necessarily mean that the patron is evil or even criminal, though. An honest town guard might become the patron of a street criminal, demanding tips and insider information in exchange for help in evading justice, regardless of how much danger the criminal faces for being a snitch.

•	Your character's patron is a local figure of some influence.
••	Your character's patron is an important figure in the city.
•••	Your character's patron is one of the dominant figures in the city, if not its ruler.
••••	Your character's patron has connections in nearby cities or perhaps powerful influence in the Guild or the Realm.
•••••	Your character's patron intrigues across an entire region of Creation and has connections in every major city therein.

Archetypes

While **Exalted** allows for great diversity in character design, as a general rule, most heroic mortals within the setting fit into one of several fairly broad character concepts referred to as archetypes. For the most part, simply fitting within an archetype adds nothing to the character other than simply saying "this character is good at fighting" or "this character prefers to think his way out of problems." Yet, each archetype also contains within it a number of professions common to the Age of Sorrows. In order to reasonably call herself a member of a given profession, your character must meet certain criteria. If she does so, her lifetime of experience within that field of endeavor manifests itself with additional Ability dots appropriate to the profession.

Each profession has a number of Abilities associated with it. If the character is eligible for a profession, she gains one free dot in three of those Abilities. These free dots are applied after Ability dots are allocated but before bonus points are spent. A free profession Ability dot can raise an Ability from 3 to 4 without the expenditure of bonus points.

The five most common archetypes are: warrior, priest, savant, criminal and broker. In addition to a number of associated professions, each archetype also identifies which castes among the various Celestial Exalted are most closely associated with it. These associations are tenuous—a mortal is perfectly capable of Exalting into any caste, regardless of who or what she was pre-Exaltation—but as a rule, warriors, for example, are more likely to join the Dawn Caste than the Twilight Caste.

Warrior

Violence and conflict rule the Age of Sorrows. Every nation has an army. Every city has a city guard. Gladiatorial combat is one of the most popular viewing pleasures among the peoples of Creation, whether in the enormous arenas and coliseums of the great cities or in pit fights staged by traveling carnivals in small towns. At the edges of Creation, barbarians pillage and murder, and everywhere, those who lead armies dream the dream of conquest.

A warrior is a heroic mortal who lives and dies by his skill at arms. Warriors usually favor Physical Attributes and are generally highly proficient with at least one form of personal combat and competent at several others. In addition to combat Abilities, warriors often favor Athletics, Awareness, Dodge and War.

A high Valor is important, but high Compassion ratings are problematic for characters who must often kill for a living.

Associated Exalted Castes: Dawn Caste Solars, Dusk Caste Abyssals, Slayer Caste Infernals, Sidereal Chosen of Battles or Chosen of Endings, Full Moon Caste Lunars

Warrior Professions

Gladiator

The gladiator fights for sport and profit. Gladiatorial combat is common across Creation, and nearly every major city has at least one arena or coliseum devoted primarily to the games. Betting is legal and highly lucrative, especially in areas where the games are a Guild operation. Consequently, a proficient gladiator is a highly valuable commodity. Most gladiators start off as slaves bought outright for training in gladiatorial schools, but free men and women often volunteer for training in such schools in hopes of making their fortune. Generally, even slaves receive a prize for each win, and exceptional fighters can often make enough to buy their own freedom. A free gladiator is on the road to fame and wealth… for as long as he survives, anyway. With freedom comes the power to manage one's own career, to travel to other arenas and even to high-purse competitions, and to leverage one's fame and crowd appeal for personal profit.

Most gladiatorial fights involve close range combat, either barehanded or armed with a melee weapon—most commonly, a short sword, lance or trident. Gladiators are accustomed to fighting with minimal armor. Although most fights are one-on-one, the best gladiators are prepared for anything. Many arenas also hold chariot races, and for some of the more jaded crowds, promoters pit gladiators against wild animals. A top gladiator might even be called upon to face a Wyld barbarian or even some horrific Wyld mutated beast.

Although most gladiators exist within the gladiatorial system, the requirements and benefits of this profession might also apply to character concepts such as "martial arts sifu," "traveling circus pit fighter" or "professional duelist." The defining characteristic is that the character fights professionally in front of an audience, usually with a fair bit of showmanship brought to the battle.

Minimum Requirements: Either Martial Arts or Melee must be a Favored Ability. The gladiator must have Martial Arts 2 and Melee 2, and she must have a specialty in one of them.

Profession Abilities: Choose three from Athletics, Martial Arts, Melee, Performance and Ride.

Guard

A guard is either a law-enforcement officer for a town or city, a security officer for the estate of some person of importance or the traveling bodyguard for a noble or some other wealthy individual. Law

enforcement is incredibly varied across Creation. In small towns, the locals might elect one of their number to serve as sheriff, who would then hire deputies to assist him. Sheriffs and deputies might also be appointed by local landowners to police their domains. In cities across Creation, the ruling governments generally establish local police forces of varying degrees of quality. City guards on the Blessed Isle, for example, are usually highly trained graduates of law-enforcement programs and are often respected ex-military, while the guards in Chiaroscuro are little more than armed thugs to whom the Tri-Khan has granted law-enforcement powers. Nexus has no established police force and instead contracts with local mercenary companies to provide law enforcement (to the extent it exists at all in Nexus). In most civilized areas, a guard is expected to not only be proficient with basic combat, but to also understand the legal structure of the society that granted her authority. Whether that expectation is met varies from place to place.

Private guards are usually ex-mercenaries or former criminals who have found a legal channel for their violence. Such guards often serve as henchmen for other characters and use their status and position to advance the interests of their patrons. Some private guards serve on security details for private estates, while others are hired as night watchmen for properties likely to be the target of burglary or other crimes. Still other private guards act as personal bodyguards for wealthy patrons. Private guards can have nearly any sort of combat training but are expected to be able to both defend themselves and those in their charge.

Minimum Requirements: Backing 1, Influence 1 (or Patron 2 in the case of private guards), Melee 2

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Awareness, Dodge, Investigation, Melee and Presence.

Soldier

A soldier is a warrior trained in the art of military combat. Some soldiers are highly decorated officers known for their personal honor and brilliant grasp of strategy. Others are lowly grunts who barely know how to swing a sword and care only about where to swing it and who is paying them to do so. Some soldiers are graduates of military academies across Creation, while others are unlettered barbarians who learned everything they know about combat from just surviving it. Some are patriots who joined the military to serve their nations, while others are mercenaries who fight for whoever pays them the most.

Soldiers are usually trained in a wide variety of combat techniques, as well as in basic military strategy. A good soldier is proficient with several weapons, although he often favors one fighting style above others. Most of Creation's soldiers are infantry, but any competent soldier will have a basic grasp of mounted combat.

Minimum Requirements: Backing 1 or Patron 1. One of the following must be a Favored Ability: Archery, Melee or War.

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Archery, Martial Arts, Melee, Ride and War. For a nautical game, the Storyteller may allow the substitution of Sail for Ride.

Thug

Some warriors fight for justice and honor. The thug does not. Brutal, efficient and loyal only to himself, the thug is most commonly the henchman of a more powerful character, usually one with a criminal background. This is not always the case, however, and some thugs work as freelance leg breakers. Warriors in the employ of the Guild are usually thugs, as that organization has no interest in formal military training. Most thugs fight with their fists, but some favor a quick knife in the back. But while the typical thug is only hired muscle, heroic mortal thugs have the potential for more, whether through a destiny that cannot be ignored or even the possibility of future Exaltation.

No particular training is needed to become a thug. Those who would employ such brutes are always on the lookout for someone who seems to have more muscle than brains and who will do what he's told in exchange for some quick cash. Of course, not all thugs are stupid. Many are quite clever but have learned to conceal their street smarts from those who want their muscle seen but not heard.

Minimum Requirements: Backing 1 or Patron 1. Strength 3, Stamina 3, Martial Arts 1

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Athletics, Dodge, Larceny, Martial Arts and Melee.

Warlord

While many warriors know how to fight in battle, only a few know how to command during one. The warlord is not just a warrior, she is a leader. Whether a grizzled mercenary barking orders, a cutthroat barbarian rampaging across the countryside or an experienced general laying out elegant battlefield stratagems, the warlord understands not just fighting but war itself. The warlord is a fairly general category that covers every character concept built around a military leader devoted to conquest who excels at commanding military units.

Most warlords have considerable military experience and acumen. The War Ability is a requirement, as is proficiency with at least one combat Ability. Training in the War Ability need not be formal, however. Many mercenaries and barbarian chieftains learned the art of war the hard way, by surviving in battle long enough to figure out what works and what doesn't. Warlords usually define themselves by the quality of troops at their disposal, and a warlord who doesn't have a high rating in Command will seek to acquire one as soon as possible.

Minimum Requirements: War 2+. Command 2+ or a Background that can be converted into Command

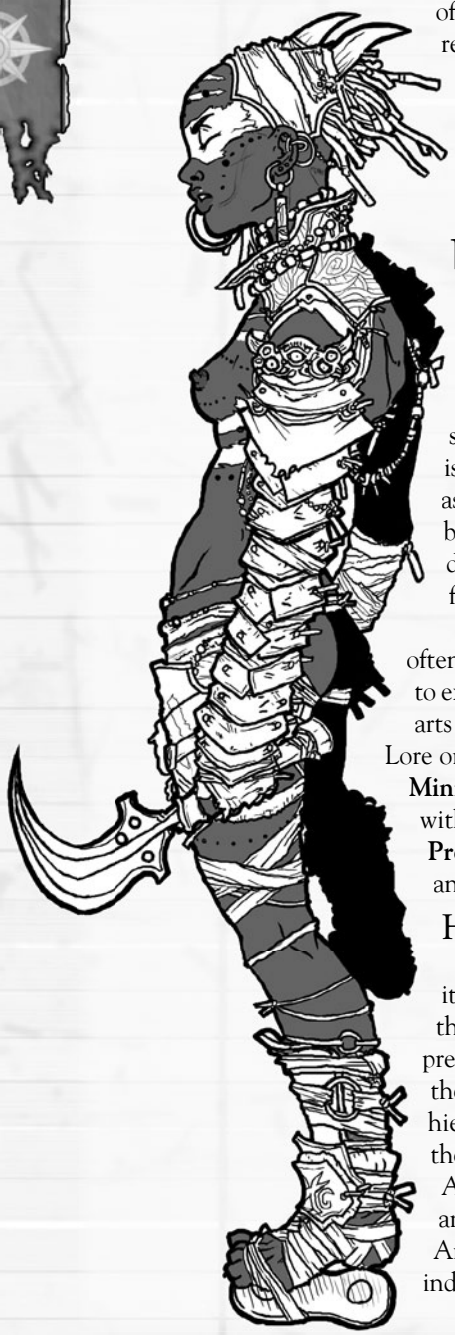
Professional Abilities: Choose three from Bureaucracy, Melee, Presence, Survival and War.

Priest

As a character archetype, the term "priest" refers to any religious figure who acts as an intermediary between the divine (which may include fallen "gods" such as the Yozi and the Neverborn or even Exalts or ghosts) and mortal society. Religion plays a powerful role in nearly every society in Creation. Indeed, atheism is virtually impossible due to the obvious role the gods play in nearly every aspect of Creation-born life. Many gods openly operate among mortals and even rule over them. In such an environment, how can priests not play a vital role?

The nature of priesthood, however, varies from individual to individual. Shamanism of one sort or another is common at the fringes of Creation, especially among barbarian tribes and among ancestor cults. In more urban areas, religion takes on a more dignified and structured tone, as dogma and tradition establish the rites of worship instead of the more improvisational spirit diplomacy practiced by shamans.

Priests almost always favor Social Attributes as befits one who must speak on behalf of deities, but a few favor Physical or Mental Attributes instead. Presence and Performance are valuable for sermonizing, and of course, prayer invariably involves a (Charisma + Performance) roll. Some priests also favor Occult and Lore in order to gain insight into the nature of the beings they serve. More than a few develop high ratings in Survival, as many deities require their priests to purify themselves by long sojourns in desolate places. Conviction is highly prized among priests who seek to show their devotion to their masters, while Temperance allows a priest to better resist temptation.



Associated Exalted Castes: Zenith Caste Solars, Midnight Caste Abyssals, Malefactor Caste Infernals, Sidereals from any caste but especially the Chosen of Serenity, Changing Moon Caste Lunars

Priest Professions

Hermit

A hermit is a priest who eschews mortal society and the temptations of mortal life in favor of an ascetic existence. Hermits differ from monks in that the latter seek enlightenment by withdrawing from Creation into a closed society of peers. A hermit seeks enlightenment alone, eschewing even the company of other like-minded religionists. Often irascible to the point of misanthropy, a hermit rejects every creature comfort associated with mortal society and, if forced to enter mortal society, will often be either befuddled by societal mores or enraged by them. Most hermits live in isolation until destiny—often in the form of the hermit's deity exercising her will—draws the hermit forth to pursue some quest.

Survival is the most important trait for a hermit, as most hermits live in isolated and often barren places. As with most priests, Performance is valuable both to perform prayers and to exhort a crowd to embrace the hermit's religious views. Many hermits also pursue martial arts training in the quest for enlightenment, and more than a few possess a high rating in Lore or Occult acquired through years of communing with the gods in isolation.

Minimum Requirements: Stamina 3, Performance 1, Survival 2. A hermit may not begin with any dots in the Socialize Ability.

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Lore, Martial Arts, Performance, Resistance and Survival.

Hierophant

A hierophant is a priest who leads mortal congregations in worship and who sees to it that the sacred mysteries of the religion are reserved for those who truly deserve to hear them. Every religion possessed of any inherent structure has hierophants who make the preliminary gospels of the religion available to the larger congregation while overseeing the initiation of true believers into the deeper mysteries. Among the Immaculate Order, hierophants are represented among the Order's leadership who determine when and how the various gods may be worshiped and who oversee the training of younger postulants. Among the priesthood of the New Order in the Skullstone Archipelago, the hierophants are those mortals who search the people of Skullstone for heretics and non-believers. Among the Houses of the Bull God in Kirighast, the hierophants are those who oversee induction into the Brides of Ahlat and who prepare for the coming revolution against the

Dragon-Blooded. While few of these religious leaders would actually call themselves hierophants, the term is properly applied to any heroic mortal who combines the role of priest with that of organizational leader.

Presence and Performance are vitally important for a hierophant, as the ability to lead is the hierophant's chief duty. Integrity is prized among them, for it determines the hierophant's loyalty to her deity's goals in the event of capture. Most hierophants oversee large congregations and/or cults, so Bureaucracy and Occult are also necessary.

Minimum Requirements: Backing (religion) 2 or Influence (religion) 2. Performance 2, Presence 2

Profession Abilities: Choose three from Bureaucracy, Integrity, Performance, Presence and Socialize.

Mendicant

A mendicant is a wandering priest. In many ways, the mendicant is similar to the hermit, in that both are divorced from the larger organizational structure of their respective religions. The mendicant does not reject mortal society, however, but embraces it. She wanders the highways and byways of Creation, preaching the gospel of her religion, enduring the scorn and intolerance of those who follow different ways and helping those who cross her path as best she can. A significant number of Immaculate priests (and especially mortal Immaculates) lead the life of a mendicant, wandering the Threshold acting as the eyes, ears and fists of the Order.

Mendicants usually have high Survival ratings, a result of years spent on the road. Many are trained in Martial Arts for self-defense, and knowledge of Medicine is common, as some mendicants function as traveling healers as well as priests. Mendicants most commonly take vows of poverty and rely on the support of their order and the kindness of strangers to survive.

Minimum Requirements: Integrity 2, Medicine 1, Survival 2. No mendicant may begin play with any dots in Resources.

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Integrity, Martial Arts, Medicine, Resistance and Survival.

Monk

A monk is a priest who withdraws from society not into seclusion like the hermit, but into a cloister of like-minded religionists. The most famous example of the monk is, of course, the Immaculate monk, but many other religions in Creation make use of the monastic lifestyle in order to help their priests pursue enlightenment. Many worshipers of the Bishop of the Chalcedony Thurible are monks, and the Brides of Ahlat also represent a form of monastic existence. In addition, a monastery devoted to the Shining Lord still stands in An-Teng.

Monks lead austere lives devoted to worship and the quest for personal enlightenment. Many pursue advanced studies in Martial Arts. Integrity is prized, as the rejection of temptation is essential to the monastic life. Most monks are also highly learned, and Lore and Occult studies are also common.

Minimum Requirements: Backing (religion) 1, Integrity 2, Martial Arts 1

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Integrity, Lore, Martial Arts, Occult and Resistance.

Shaman

Most commonly found at the fringes of society among barbarian cultures, the shaman is a priest who negotiates pacts between mortal worshipers and those gods and elementals who exist outside the structured framework of the Immaculate Order. Shamans see to it that local gods are appeased and cajoled into blessing local societies. They also act as lawgivers and judges for such primitive societies, and in some cultures, the shaman also acts as village elder and leader. Among ancestor cults, shamans also propitiate the spirits of the dead and see to it that ancestors are properly worshiped and obeyed.

Most shamans are wise to the ways of the spirit worlds but are also attuned to the physical world and able to survive in its harshest environments. Performance is important for prayer, while Occult and Lore are needed to understand the strange ways of the little gods. Some shamans also function as village healers in their communities and frequently as arbiters, judges and lawgivers as well.

Minimum Requirements: Charisma 3, Lore 1, Occult 1, Performance 1, Survival 1

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Lore, Medicine, Occult, Performance and Survival.

Savant

The archetypal savant is a heroic mortal whose goal is the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, whether for his own enlightenment or in pursuit of personal power. In general, a savant is simply any person of learning who may be consulted for information about some arcane topic. As a practical matter, the only requirement to being a savant is simply having a significantly higher level of education and knowledge than those around you. A savant may be privately employed as a physician, a scribe or as a freelance scholar. Many savants in the Threshold become scavenger lords, achieving great wealth and power through their explorations of lost cities and forgotten tombs. One might also serve on the staff of some wealthy personage or even a national government, as in the case of military thaumaturges. A few might even be slaves working as tutors or scribes or simply shackled to forges or drafting tables.

Savants almost always favor Mental Attributes. Either Social or Physical Attributes might be secondary, depending on whether the savant must engage in some degree of diplomacy and salesmanship in her work or is instead an adventurous scavenger lord who must overcome deadly dangers in the pursuit of forgotten knowledge and lost treasure. Lore and Occult are prized among savants. Sedentary savants also favor Bureaucracy, Linguistics or Medicine, depending on their specific job titles, while scavenger lords prefer Athletics and Survival to aid in their long expeditions. As an archetype, savants neither favor nor disfavor any particular Virtues. The Esoteric Knowledge Background is both common and favored among savants. Most savants respect age as long as it is accompanied by wisdom and experience.

Associated Exalted Castes: Twilight Caste Solars, Daybreak Caste Abyssals, Defiler Caste Infernals, Sidereal Chosen of Journeys or of Secrets, No Moon Caste Lunars

Savant Professions

Craftmason

Craftmason is a blanket term for a savant whose area of expertise is in designing and making things, whether as the chief architect for a great metropolis or as a lowly blacksmith in a one-horse town. Most of Creation's militaries have combat engineers who oversee the construction of barricades and siege engines, as well as the maintenance of siege weapons and even minor artifacts. Lookshy and the Realm, in particular, train mortal craftmasons to maintain warstriders (although major repairs for such artifacts often require Exalted skill). Other major powers call upon the services of architects and engineers to oversee the construction of new building projects or to preserve or repurpose fallen wonders from the First Age. In Chiaroscuro, for example, craftmasons oversee the careful excavation of razor-sharp adamant fragments from the fallen areas of the city, fragments that are then used to make adamant weapons and armor. But even a solitary blacksmith or carpenter in a tiny hamlet still has the potential to be a heroic mortal and the chance to use his skills in the pursuit of greatness.

Craft is the defining Ability of the craftmason, regardless of what specific form that Ability takes. Lore is valuable, as is Bureaucracy for those craftmasons who are self-employed or who work for governmental entities. In the Age of Sorrows, craftwork is often a highly physical activity, and the ability to swing a hammer often allows for a fair bit of Melee.

Combat engineers often have formal training in Melee, as well as War.

Minimum Requirements: Craft (any) 3, plus Craft as a Favored Ability

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Bureaucracy, Craft, Lore, Melee and War.

Physician

Compared to the First Age, a time when disease was almost eradicated and a state-of-the-art hospital could be found in every major city, medicine in the Second Age is inadequate, bordering on nonexistent. In cities where healthcare systems have had some measure of continuity from the First Age, basic surgical techniques and disease-treating remedies are still available, but the miracle cures of the First Age are only the stuff of legend. In rural areas, healing is the role of the village wise woman or the local shaman and rarely consists of more than home remedies, some of which work and some of which are quackery.

Naturally, the physician favors Medicine, and many also have high levels of Lore in order to research ancient medical texts. Investigation can help in forming a diagnosis, while Occult helps in identifying maladies with a supernatural origin. Many physicians hold positions of status in their communities, and their pronouncements as to what must be done to preserve public health are often reinforced by a high Socialize rating.

Minimum Requirements: Intelligence 3, Medicine 3 (plus Medicine as a Favored Ability)

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Investigation, Lore, Medicine, Occult and Socialize.

Scavenger Lord

Part archeologist and explorer, part tomb raider and thief, the scavenger lord wanders Creation seeking his fortune among the ruins and detritus of the First Age. So many wonders are still out there, just waiting to be discovered by anyone with the wit and courage to find them. Unfortunately, too many of these wonders never see the light of day again, protected as they are by ancient traps and bizarre occult defenders. The risks of life as a scavenger lord are high, but even the simplest artifacts are worth a king's ransom, more than enough to make it worth his while… if he survives to bring his booty home.

Born survivors, most scavenger lords have eclectic skill sets. Lore and Occult are necessary to lead the scavenger lord to the hidden treasures he seeks. Survival, Larceny and Athletics allow him to penetrate ancient defenses and overcome deadly traps in order to bring that treasure home again. Although it is not a professional Ability, many scavenger lords also have high levels of Craft, which is useful in either repairing or repurposing damaged or destroyed artifacts. While it is not required, a high Valor rating is often helpful, given the many frightening encounters the scavenger lord must face in the field.

Minimum Requirements: Wits 3, Lore 2, Occult 2. The scavenger lord must have at least one specialty in Lore or Occult pertaining to the First Age.

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Athletics, Larceny, Lore, Occult and Survival.

Scholar

Men of letters and women of learning, scholars function as teachers, scribes, secretaries and seneschals. Many scholars work directly for wealthy patrons as tutors for children or as personal secretaries. Others are contract employees hired to run businesses on behalf of the owners. Some scholars are slaves, but usually trusted and prized slaves who often hold positions of authority even over free persons in their masters' employ. Regardless of an individual scholar's circumstances, as a profession, a scholar is simply a highly educated person whose employment is derived from his superior knowledge and training within a particular field of intellectual endeavor. Unlike craftmasons, who actually have to build things, scholars are paid simply to know things.

The key to success for a scholar is a high Lore rating, which translates into a broad academic background. Linguistics is also favored heavily, while Bureaucracy and Investigation are essential for scholars who play any role in the running of a business. Many scholars also dabble in thaumaturgy and add Occult to their repository of knowledge. Naturally, Mental Attributes are almost always primary, but scholars neither favor nor disfavor any Virtue.

Minimum Requirements: Intelligence 3, Lore 3 (Lore must be a Favored Ability)

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Bureaucracy, Investigation, Linguistics, Lore and Occult.

Thaumaturge

The vast majority of Creation's people will never see true sorcery performed. Exalted are too rare, and sorcery is too arduous and difficult to learn for those Exalted who do exist. Therefore, when most people think of "magic," they think of thaumaturges, men and women who have mastered the art and practice of thaumaturgy. Respected but often feared, thaumaturges study forgotten lore and secret occult rituals. They can summon demons, exorcise ghosts and spirits, enchant objects and read the stars. In Lookshy and the Realm, thaumaturges play a vital role in military exercises due to the importance of thaumaturgical rituals in maintaining artifact weaponry. In Skullstone, thaumaturges work alongside God-Blooded necromancers to maintain the death magics that allow their ghoulish nation to flourish. In the South, thaumaturge astrologers form the basis of Varangia's entire society by casting the birth horoscopes that will determine each citizen's caste and destiny.

Thaumaturges almost always make Mental Attributes primary and favor a high Intelligence. Occult is essential, and Lore almost as much. Integrity allows the thaumaturge to resist the temptations of the demons she summons, while Presence allows her to treat with gods and spirits with civility. Craft is useful in setting up the arcane components of thaumaturgical rituals.

Minimum Requirements: Intelligence 3, Occult 3 (Occult must be a Favored Ability), at least one Art at the Initiate level

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Craft, Integrity, Lore, Occult and Presence.

Criminal

In the Age of Sorrows, crime is a regrettable fact of life. Of course, it was also a fact of life even in the idealized First Age, but back then, even organized crime was, for the most part, run by Solar Exalts who saw criminal enterprise as just one more tool for social control. While a life of crime is an unsavory one rarely consistent with the usual definition of "hero," many criminals are nevertheless heroic mortals. As an archetype, the word "criminal" does not refer specifically to those convicted of criminal acts or even those who have committed criminal acts. Rather, a criminal is one who lives his life in Creation's seamy underbelly, rejecting societal norms and conventional notions of moral behavior. One might be a dashing rogue who steals from the rich to feed poor orphans. Another might be a ruthless assassin feared across Creation. Still another might simply be an itinerant gambler who rarely engages in crime himself but is perfectly comfortable being around those who do.

Heroic mortal criminals typically focus on those Abilities that are most useful to a career criminal—Larceny, Stealth and Athletics. Criminals who favor violent crime typically favor Physical Attributes and one or more combat Abilities. Con artists and gamblers prefer Social Attributes and Abilities such as Presence, Performance and Socialize, which facilitate the manipulation of others. Generally, the criminal lifestyle does not require a high degree of education, so Intelligence is not particularly favored, but Wits and Perception are invaluable, and some criminals might have Mental Attributes as primary. Virtues are flexible, but it is an unusual criminal who has a high Temperance. Most career criminals are creatures of impulse, after all. Among violent criminals, Compassion is usually just as rare.

Associated Exalted Castes: Night Caste Solars, Day Caste Abyssals, Scourge Caste Infernals, Sidereal Chosen of Journeys or of Endings, Changing Moon Caste Lunars

Criminal Professions

Assassin

In this Time of Tumult, it is sadly common to find people willing to kill for money and even more common to find people willing to pay for another person's death. Assassins are trained in the arts of stealth combat. Some are associated with death cults, notably the Salmalin. Most assassins, however, are self-taught individuals who have discovered that they have a flair for the art of killing. That art can rescue a young assassin from a life of poverty and deliver her to one of wealth and power—if she's willing to harden her heart to what she does for a living.

Assassins invariably favor Athletics, Stealth and at least one combat Ability. It is a rare assassin who limits herself to one weapon, however. Thrown and Melee are the most common, depending on whether the assassin prefers shuriken and throwing knives over a quick dagger to the throat. Many also favor Medicine, often taking a specialty in poisons. Although most assassins favor Physical Attributes, some of the deadliest make Mental Attributes primary instead, relying on obscure poisons or elaborate death traps designed to make their kills look like accidents. The very best might even possess dots in the Face Background as their reputation spreads with each new kill.

Minimum Requirements: Athletics 2, Stealth 2, Melee 2 or Thrown 2. An assassin may not begin with a Compassion higher than 2.

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Athletics, Medicine, Melee, Stealth and Thrown

Gambler

It is not actually necessary for a gambler to be a criminal, but it is inevitable that a gambler will travel in criminal circles, given the type of people who typically run casinos and gambling rings in the Age of Sorrows. Creation is full of people who want to get rich quick and have little to no understanding of the rules of probability. Such people are the prey of the gambler. Nearly every major city will have at least one casino and innumerable back alley dice and card games.

The skill of the gambler is to move in such circles and win consistently without arousing the wrath of the losers.

Gamblers usually favor Social Attributes, but Perception and Wits are both valuable. Larceny is the Ability used for most gambling rolls, especially to cheat. Performance allows for cool bluffs, while Awareness lets a gambler spot the deception of others. The best gamblers have the Luck Merit, which can turn a 50-50 coin toss into a sure thing. Successful gamblers may have high Resources but know that such advantages can be lost with the next spin of the wheel.

Minimum Requirements: Larceny 2 (Larceny must be a Favored Ability). The character must have a specialty in at least one form of gambling.

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Awareness, Dodge, Larceny, Performance and Presence

Master Thief

As long as the human race exists, someone will desire what another possesses, and if he cannot steal it away on his own, he will hire someone else to do it. Thieves are ubiquitous in the Age of Sorrows, but truly great thieves are a rare breed. A master thief is one with almost superhuman stealth and dexterity, as well as an up-to-date knowledge of most contemporary security measures. The very best are also highly intelligent and usually knowledgeable about even First Age traps and defenses, the better to pluck treasures right from a Dragon-Blood's nest. Some are members (or even heads) of local thieves' guilds that provide assistance to burglars and pickpockets alike in exchange for a generous commission. Others run solo, stealing what they wish on behalf of a wealthy benefactor or simply for their own amusement.

Master thieves are smarter than the typical criminal and usually favor Mental Attributes. Physical is usually secondary, with Dexterity heavily favored, but some thieves rely on Social Attributes and trickery to get them close to the treasure they seek. Larceny is, naturally, a required Ability, with Athletics and Stealth also essential. Master thieves most often favor Conviction but rarely emphasize any Virtue to an exceptional degree. A high Valor is often a negative, as the wise thief knows when to run and hide. Some master thieves possess the Face Background, which represents the characters' reputation among the criminal classes.

Minimum Requirements: Larceny 3 (Larceny must be a Favored Ability). The character must have at least one specialty related to theft.

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Athletics, Awareness, Larceny, Presence and Stealth.

Racketeer

A racketeer is a member of an organized criminal (or quasi-criminal) enterprise. Many would consider operatives of the Guild to be racketeers, especially in those locales where its drug dealing, slave trading and other less savory activities are openly practiced. Outside the Guild, racketeers often work for local criminal syndicates or as trusted fixers for powerful businessmen or nobles. Smuggling, loan-sharking, blackmail, prostitution, assassination—if there is money to be made from it, a racketeer will figure out how to get a percentage.

Within the Guild, racketeers often operate as the public legal face of Guild activities while simultaneously running its illegal activities and also concealing them from local law enforcement. Such operatives are masters of social manipulation and political intrigue. Their agenda is simple: maximize profits, by any means necessary. Other racketeers function in capacities ranging from lowly pimps to the heads of international assassination societies.

Racketeers constitute a diverse lot. Those who favor Physical Attributes and Abilities are most often leg breakers and hired muscle, not unlike common thugs (although usually with more ambition and cunning than the typical member of that profession). Those who favor Social Attributes use diplomacy to insinuate themselves and their co-conspirators into the good graces of local governments and persons of influence. Those who favor Mental Attributes are the crime lords and masterminds who direct the functioning of these illegal organizations. The one common feature among racketeers is that they all work either with or for others. The racketeer never works alone, but instead carries either the backing of some larger organization, the patronage of some powerful crime figure or the support of a group of followers willing to affect his schemes.

Minimum Requirements: Backing 2, Followers 2 or Patron 2. Larceny 2. A racketeer may not begin with a Compassion above 2.

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Awareness, Bureaucracy, Larceny, Presence and Socialize.

Scam Artist

There is a saying that goes, "A tree cannot help but surrender its leaves." To a scam artist, those are words to live by. Scam artists are criminals who rely on trickery and misdirection rather than either brute force or artful robbery in liberating cash from their chosen victims. Minor scam artists run games of "follow the Empress" on street corners or run simple, basic con jobs on tourists. Luminaries of the profession run elaborate, high-risk cons on the wealthy and powerful, and a few have even dared to cheat the Dragon-Blooded, though even fewer live to tell the tale.

For scam artists, a high Manipulation is essential, while Charisma and Appearance are highly valuable. Mental Attributes are also prized, while Physical Attributes are usually necessary only when a con goes sour. Performance and Presence are the chief Abilities of the scam artist, but Larceny and Socialize play valuable rolls. The wise scam artist also develops her Dodge Ability. Eventually, *someone* will try to hit her.

Minimum Requirements: Manipulation 3, Performance 2, Presence 2, a specialty related to lying or trickery

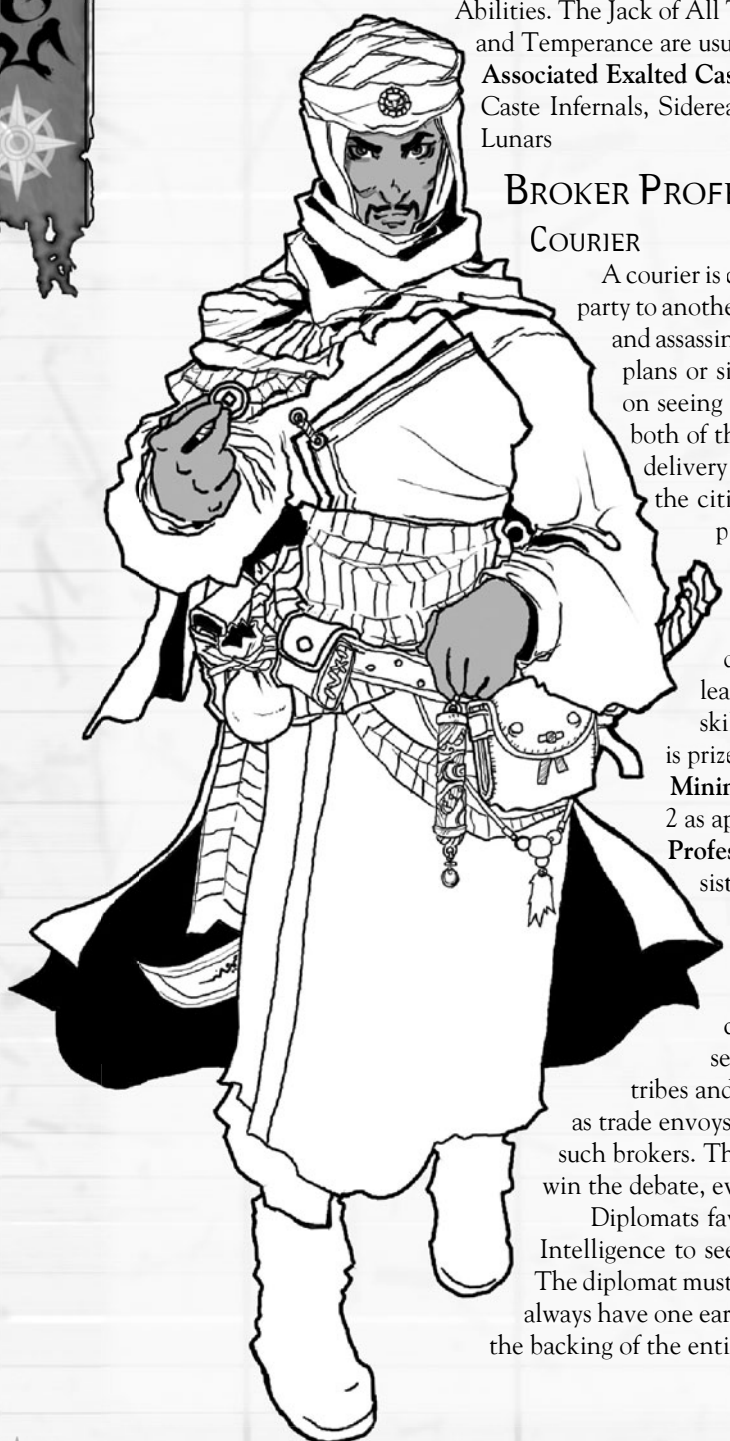
Professional Abilities: Choose three from Dodge, Larceny, Performance, Presence and Socialize.

Broker

A fairly broad archetype, the broker facilitates social interactions between others, especially in the governmental or business sense. Brokers oversee the purchase and transportation of goods, the administration of city affairs, the workings of a noble court or the subtle arts of diplomacy and espionage. There are as many types of brokers as there are social interactions. Some brokers are born to the archetype, inheriting their position from parents or elders. Others work their way up through the lower ranks of whatever institution pays the broker's salary. Regardless, brokers tend toward urbane sophistication, and even uneducated barbarians who fit this archetype are cooler and more sociable than their peers.

Brokers heavily favor Social Attributes, regardless of profession, but some prefer Mental Attributes, especially those who operate in the financial or espionage sectors. Whatever Abilities a broker favors will be the ones that best facilitate his chosen profession—merchants favor Bureaucracy, while spies favor Presence—but most brokers favor a wide selection of Abilities. The Jack of All Trades Merit is especially common among brokers. Conviction and Temperance are usually favored, but not by an overwhelming degree.

Associated Exalted Castes: Eclipse Caste Solars, Moonshadow Caste Abyssals, Fiend Caste Infernals, Sidereal Chosen of Journeys or of Serenity, Changing Moon Caste Lunars



Broker Professions

Courier

A courier is charged with delivering sensitive information or items from one party to another, whether across enemy lines or simply past gangs of cutthroats and assassins. Whether the courier is conveying a trade agreement, military plans or simply love letters, her success and often her life both depend on seeing the package delivered. Some couriers work directly for one or both of the parties to the exchange. Yet, many large cities have private delivery agencies, often operating with no questions asked. Away from the cities, couriers also act as guides willing to shepherd travelers or pilgrims from one town to the next, if the price is right.

The courier is easily the most physically inclined of the broker professions. He must often travel long distances to perform his duties and usually overcome physical hardships to do so. The work is often dangerous, and most couriers have at least a passing familiarity with self-defense or at least good evasion skills. Physical Attributes are most often primary, and Conviction is prized among those looking for a good courier.

Minimum Requirements: Athletics 2, Linguistics 1, Ride 2 (or Sail 2 as appropriate)

Professional Abilities: Choose three from Athletics, Dodge, Resistance, Ride and Survival. For games with a nautical setting, substitute Sail for Ride.

Diplomat

Whether negotiating the end of a war or simply for new trade concessions, diplomats travel the length and breadth of Creation seeking to establish new bonds between cities and businesses, tribes and nations. Even the Guild maintains a fleet of diplomats to act as trade envoys, although the line between diplomat and spy tends to blur for such brokers. The ideal diplomat is one who always seems to let the other side win the debate, even as he walks away with whatever prize he seeks.

Diplomats favor Charisma and Manipulation in equal amounts, as well as Intelligence to see through the complexities of treaties and trade negotiations. The diplomat must be charming but aloof, an able speaker and writer, and he must always have one ear listening for what is not being said. Diplomats invariably have the backing of the entity they represent, and often influence within it as well.

Minimum Requirements: Backing 2 (associated with the party the diplomat represents), Presence 2. Charisma 3 or Manipulation 3.
Professional Abilities: Choose three from Awareness, Linguistics, Lore, Presence and Socialize.

Merchant

"Everything has its price," they say, but only a good merchant knows what it is or how to get it. A merchant is a broker who either owns or manages a business of some sort. Most commonly, such a business is merely a trading concern that either produces and sells goods or simply conveys them from one seller to another buyer for a cut of the profits. Heroic merchants often sell more exotic goods and will travel thousands of miles for some precious rarity. The traders on the Guild caravansaries and the shipping magnates of the West are merchants, as are the slavers of Nexus and the dreamstone merchants of Gem. Although the typical merchant is often staid and perhaps a bit plump, heroic merchants are more often bold sea captains who risk death or worse in pursuit of the next big cargo or charismatic entrepreneurs always looking for the next deal.

Merchants are diverse and favor no particular Attribute as a profession. A typical merchant is invariably skilled at Bureaucracy and Socialize, while the best hagglers are skilled at Presence. A good merchant will know how to ride a horse or pilot a ship unless he maintains a business in a set location, usually in a major city. While the owner of a one-room general store in a tiny hamlet may be a heroic merchant, a tycoon or sea captain is far more common.
Minimum Requirements: Resources 2, Bureaucracy 2, (Bureaucracy must be a Favored Ability). The character must have at least one Bureaucracy specialty pertaining to trade or salesmanship.
Professional Abilities: Choose three from Bureaucracy, Presence, Ride, Sail and Socialize.

Noble

Most people choose their profession or have it chosen for them. A noble is born into his. Nobles are heroic mortals who, by virtue of birth or adoption, stand as scions to some politically powerful family group. The mortal members of the Great Houses of the Realm or the Gentes of Lookshy are nobles, but aristocracy is common across Creation. Gem, Chiaroscuro, Cherak and many more beside all have ruling families whose members are considered nobility. Furthermore, the noble profession need not be limited to those legitimately recognized as aristocrats. The family members of high-ranking Guild members might be considered nobles, as would the children of the Council of Entities in Nexus.

The true mark of nobility, at least as far as the profession goes, is being raised from childhood to understand how to rule others. Nobles may have the social acumen of diplomats or wealth equal to the greatest merchants. In some situations, the noble might have Command, although Henchmen are more common. Generally, a noble can be any sort of character, but as a profession, a certain amount of education, breeding and style are essential. The king's son may be an illiterate pig who eats with his bare hands, but he will not have any of the benefits of the noble profession. Most nobles will, at least in comparison to most mortals, be educated, socially adroit and able to maintain their families' holdings.
Minimum Requirements: Mentor 3 or Patron 3 (representing the ranking noble from whom the character has inherited his status). At least one dot in the Heir Apparent Merit (see pp. 56-57).
Professional Abilities: Choose three from Bureaucracy, Lore, Performance, Presence and Socialize.

Spy

Masters of intrigue and deception, spies are heroic mortals who infiltrate the enemies of their employers to gain intelligence and, where practicable, destroy them from within. While the All-Seeing Eye of the Scarlet Empire is the most (in)famous spy agency in Creation, spies may be found in the employ of nearly every nation, city, criminal enterprise and noble family in the world. Major businesses, including the Guild, regularly engage in industrial espionage. Even many religions have spies working for them to ferret out heretics. In fact, spies are so common that access to a spy network is a widely held Background.

Good spies are master dissemblers. High Mental and Social Attributes are equally prized among spymasters. A spy should be proficient at subterfuge, impersonation, interrogation and infiltration. A few also specialize at assassination, and there is some overlap between the spy and assassin professions. Generally, all spies have either Backing (if the spy works for an organization) or Patron (if she works for a single, powerful individual). Conviction is the most important Virtue for a successful spy, with Temperance a distant second for most.
Minimum Requirements: Backing 2 or Patron 2. Presence 2, Manipulation 3
Professional Abilities: Choose three from Larceny, Performance, Presence, Socialize and Stealth.

I'M BACKING OUT.
I RAISE. ALL OR NOTHING THIS TIME, HONEY.
I'LL BUY THIS POT IF I HAVE TO. IT'S WORTH IT TO MAKE HER BACK OUT JUST ONCE.
HRM... WHAT TO DO, WHAT TO DO?
I CALL. AND I HAVE A PAIR OF EIGHTS. YOU?
HOW... DID... YOU...
KNOW?!?!?

CHAPTER THREE
MERITS AND FLAWS

The standard rules outlined in **Exalted** and its various supplements provide for remarkable diversity for character creation, but sometimes, a player wants to add a few bells and whistles to her character. Among those bells and whistles are Merits and Flaws. A Merit is a special benefit the character possesses that may be purchased at character creation with bonus points. Most Merits are comparable to Backgrounds, but whereas Backgrounds define the character's possessions, connections and special abilities, Merits more commonly represent physical advantages, character quirks and other characteristics not easily modeled with conventional Backgrounds.

Flaws are the opposite of Merits. They are physical disadvantages, psychological drawbacks and other characteristics that interfere with the character's progress as obstacles or handicaps to overcome. Each Flaw carries a bonus point value, and these bonus points are added to the bonus points with which each character is created. **A character may not begin with more than 10 extra bonus points gained from Flaws.** Although a player may select as many Flaws as he wishes for his character, he cannot gain more than 10 bonus points in exchange. (There is an exception, however, for God-Blooded who possess the Inheritance Background or heroic mortal characters with the Esoteric Knowledge Background. These Backgrounds can increase the maximum number of points that can be gained from Flaws.) A player may spend as many of his bonus points as he wishes on Merits. As always, the Storyteller has the final authority to limit the number of Merits or Flaws that may be taken, or even to ban them altogether.

The Storyteller may also veto the selection of any particular Merit or Flaw he chooses for any reason whatsoever. This is particularly important in games in which the characters are or will become Exalted. A blind, one-armed, syphilitic beggar with an irrational fear of

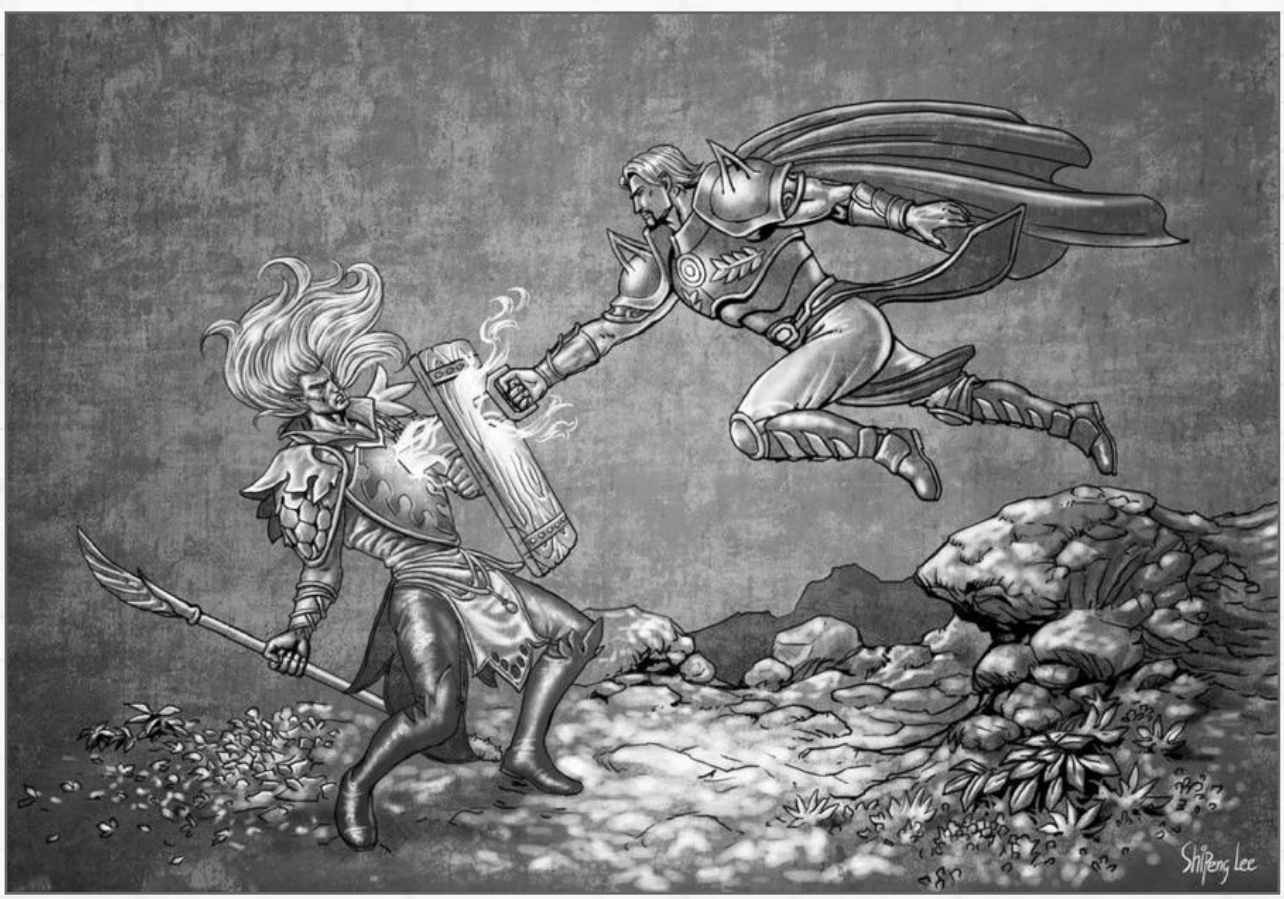
physical violence might be an interesting character to play, but she is an unlikely candidate for Solar Exaltation. The Storyteller should always give careful thought to how Merits and Flaws selected by the players might adversely affect the series. For example, a Solar character who possesses the Known Anathema Flaw would probably bring the wrath of the Wyld Hunt down on her circlemates as well as herself. The Storyteller should not be forced to choose between effectively freeing the character from the adverse effects of a seven-point Flaw or inflicting the full effects of that Flaw on other characters who have not taken it and have gained no benefit from it.

Most of the Merits and Flaws described in this chapter are available to any character. Some have availability restrictions, however. For example, a Merit might be restricted to Exalted or un-Exalted characters, or it might require a minimum rating in an Attribute or Ability. Other Merits and Flaws have modified costs for certain characters, such as the Double-Jointed Merit, which is cheaper for Lunar Exalts to acquire.

Many Merits add dice bonuses to certain types of roll, while many Flaws inflict dice penalties. Merit bonuses stack with applicable specialties but do not count as either part of the normal dice pool or as a specialty for purposes of Excellencies. Unlike specialties, the bonuses gained from multiple applicable Merits stack, but the Storyteller is free to veto any combination of Merits that might disrupt the game or abuse the system.

Gaining and Losing Merits and Flaws

Generally, Merits and Flaws are acquired only at character creation. Over the course of a series, however, it is possible to gain and lose both through roleplay. The Storyteller should approach such changes cautiously, though, as some players might benefit from a particular allocation of Merits and Flaws in a way that is unfair to the other players. For example, a character who begins play with only one eye (a three-point Flaw) may soon recover that lost eye by finding some source of magical healing, thereby getting two additional bonus points basically for free. Yet, a different character who loses an eye in combat (perhaps through being subjected to a Charm that carries a Crippling effect) effectively gains the same Flaw but receives nothing in exchange. If the Storyteller approaches such situations in an inconsistent manner, players might find it unfair. There are three basic options on how to approach the acquisition of Merits and Flaws during game play. Any of the options represents a valid approach, but the Storyteller should make it clear to the players which option he is using.



Option 1: The simplest option is just to say, "Too bad. So sad." (That is, "Please accept that Merits and Flaws can change over the course of the series just like Backgrounds.") A character who loses the benefits of a Merit or who acquires a new Flaw gains nothing in recompense, while a character who acquires a Merit or sheds a Flaw pays no penalty. While some players might consider this unfair, it is the simplest means for dealing with the issue, provided that the Storyteller is consistent and does not show favoritism.

Option 2: Another option is to balance out Merits acquired through game play with Storyteller-imposed Flaws, while rewarding new Flaws acquired with a corresponding amount of Merits. This is simple but relatively fair approach, although some players might find it arbitrary and some Storytellers have difficulty plausibly working such benefits into the story. As an alternative, the Storyteller could choose to balance newly acquired Merits and Flaws with an increase or decrease in some other trait. For example, a character who acquires the four-point version of the Enchanting Features Merit might suffer the loss of a point of Temperance, as his newly improved ability to seduce others increases his temptation to do so.

Option 3: Perhaps the fairest option, albeit the one that calls for the most bookkeeping on the Storyteller's part, is to reward the acquisition of new Flaws with additional experience and to "bill" players for the acquisition of new Merits by docking their experience. Essentially, this turns the in-game acquisition of a Merit into a Training effect (see **Exalted**, p. 183). If a character loses a Merit or gains a Flaw, the Storyteller should grant her a one-time experience point bonus equal to twice the cost of the Merit or Flaw affected. If the character gains a Merit or loses a Flaw as a result of in-game events, she acquires an experience debt equal to twice the cost of the Merit or Flaw. Thereafter, she must pay half of all newly acquired experience to pay down the debt until it is extinguished. Under this option, a character who acquires more than 10 points worth of Flaws should not receive any additional experience points.

Mutations as Merits and Flaws

With Storyteller approval, a player may acquire a mutation as either a Merit or a Flaw, whichever is appropriate, during character creation. Positive mutations purchased with bonus points cost one point for a pox, two for an affliction, four for a blight or six for an abomination. Negative mutations supply bonus points as follows: one for a deficiency, two for a debility or four for a deformity. Most mutations, whether positive or negative, are unnatural and are typically the result of exposure to some sort of supernatural phenomenon—most commonly, exposure to the Wyld. Other sources of mutations include alterations made to the character by the Charms of an Exalt, a raksha, a demon or a god. Akuma, for example, may acquire both positive and negative mutations when first transformed through the Investiture of Infernal Glory, while a raksha might bless or curse a mortal with mutations through the Behemoth-Forging Meditation Charm.

Some mutations are naturally occurring but represent rare characteristics among adult mortals. For example, the Small pox (see **Exalted**, p. 288) is universally common among children but rare among mortals save for naturally small people like the Djala or mortals suffering from dwarfism. Alternatively, the Large pox (see **Exalted**, p. 288) is uncommon among mortals but not so unusual that gigantism is unheard of.

In addition to the core book, positive and negative mutations can be found in the following supplements:

- **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars**, pp. 207–210
- **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld**, pp. 144–150
- **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals**, pp. 62–64

Merits

Physical Merits

These Merits improve the functioning of the character's Physical Attributes and associated Abilities.

Ambidextrous

Cost: 1 pt.
Availability: Anyone

Most people favor one hand over the other and suffer an internal penalty for using a weapon or tool with the off hand. An ambidextrous character ignores this penalty and can freely use either hand for Dexterity-related actions without penalty. In close combat, an ambidextrous character wielding a melee or one-handed martial arts weapon can shift his weapon from one hand to the other freely with a single success on a [Dexterity + (Martial Arts or Melee)] roll. Doing so counts as an action but reduces the Parry DV of the target of the character's next attack by two, provided that the two combatants are already in close combat.

Double-Jointed

Cost: 1 pt. or 3 pts. (1 pt. or 2 pts. for Lunars)
Availability: Anyone (very common among Lunars)

The character is remarkably supple and skilled at easily dislocating her limbs and flexing her body into odd positions. With the one-point version of this Merit, the character gains a one-die bonus to all grapple rolls and to all rolls in which such flexibility benefits the

character, primarily rolls based on Dexterity, Athletics and/or Larceny.

For three points, the character is a master contortionist capable of any number of remarkable (and often disturbing) feats of flexibility. The character gains a three-die bonus on all Dexterity, Athletics and/or Larceny rolls, and the difficulty of escaping from non-magical bonds decreases by two (to a minimum difficulty of 1). Also, anyone who attempts to grapple the character suffers a -1 external penalty. For Lunar Exalted, this improved version of the Merit costs only two points.

Fleet of Foot

Cost: 1–3 pts.

Availability: Anyone

The character is incredibly fast in an all-out sprint. Normally, a Dash action allows a character to move (Dexterity + 6 – wound penalties – mobility penalty) yards per tick. A player may take Fleet of Foot up to three times. Each instance adds two yards to the distance the character can move as part of a Dash action without any effect on DV. This Merit has no effect on normal Move actions.

Improved Resistance

Cost: 1 pt. or 1–5 pts.

Availability: Anyone

Improved Resistance assists the character in resisting the effects of poisons, drunkenness and/or disease. There are two versions of this Merit. For one point, the character can be totally immune to one specific disease or to one specific poison and will always automatically succeed on any (Stamina + Resistance) roll to resist it. For purposes of this Merit, alcohol counts as a poison, and a character with Improved Alcohol Resistance will never get drunk no matter how much he consumes.

Alternatively, the character may acquire an Improved Resistance against *all* toxins and diseases. The character can acquire up to five dots in this version of the Merit, with each dot adding a one-die bonus to all (Stamina + Resistance) rolls to resist disease, poison or intoxication. A character may possess both versions of this Merit. For example, a character might have a general +3 resistance to all diseases and toxins as well as total immunity to a specific disease (such as the tuberculosis he survived as a child) or poison (such as the arrow frog venom with which he prefers to coat his weapon).

Legendary [Attribute]

Cost: 5 pts. (3 pts. for Exalted)

Availability: Anyone (very common among Exalted and God-Blooded)

Normally, a character may not raise any of his Attributes above 5 unless he has also raised his permanent Essence above 5, in which case, his permanent Essence rating becomes his new Attribute cap. A character with this Merit increases his normal Attribute cap by one with regard to a single Attribute. For example, a character with Legendary Strength would be able to raise his Strength to 6, regardless of his Essence rating. If he later raised his Essence to 6, he could then improve his Strength to 7. This Merit does not actually *give* the character any extra dots in the chosen Attribute, it merely confers the potential to reach a superhuman level within it. If the player selects this Merit during character creation, however, it is certainly possible to acquire a six-dot rating in an Attribute with bonus points.

Although Legendary [Attribute] is grouped among Physical Merits, identical Merits exist for Social and Mental Attributes.

Omnidexterity

Cost: 3 pts. (2 pts. for Haltans or 1 pt. for Lunar Exalted)

Availability: Rare (common, however, among Haltans, jungle-dwelling Eastern barbarians and Wyld mutants, and among Lunars)

The character's feet are specially adapted to grasp objects, including tools and even weapons, and she suffers no dice penalties for doing so. This Merit is quite common among the Haltans and other tree-dwelling peoples and particularly common among Lunars. A character with this Merit also gains the benefits of the Ambidextrous Merit for free. Once you've learned to wield a sword with your toes, doing so with your off hand is nothing.

Pain Tolerance

Cost: 3 pts., 5 pts. or 7 pts.

Availability: Anyone (very common among Lunars, as well as ghosts and Abyssals with corpse-like flesh)

The character is remarkably resistant to the debilitating effects of injury. She still suffers from the existence of such injuries, but in terms of the dice penalties associated with lost health levels, she simply doesn't notice pain. With the three-point version of this Merit, the character treats her -1 health levels as being -0 health levels, ignoring all wound penalties before the -2 level. With the five-point version, the character also treats her -2 levels as being -0 levels, ignoring all wound penalties before -4. With the seven-point version, she ignores all wound penalties and can continue to function normally until her last Dying level is filled in.

Although clearly beneficial, this Merit also has certain drawbacks, as the character's preternatural toughness impairs her sense of touch. With the three-point version, the difficulty of all touch-based Perception rolls increases by one. With the five-point version, the difficulty of such rolls increases by two. Finally, with the seven-point version, the character feels nothing through touch and automatically fails all Perception rolls to do so. This Merit does not stack

with supernatural effects that negate wound penalties. Only the most powerful applicable effect applies.

Selective Conception

Cost: 1 pt.

Availability: Anyone

Your character controls his own fertility. A female character with this Merit can have sex as often as the opportunity is available, with no possibility of pregnancy unless she chooses to allow it. Said female character can also, at the cost of one Willpower point, ensure pregnancy after copulation with any male who is not sterile. A male character with this Merit cannot ensure pregnancy, but he can prevent undesired pregnancies. A male who does not actively exercise that option may or may not sire offspring during a sexual encounter and will not know whether a pregnancy occurs.

This Merit is prized among Dynastic Dragon-Blooded due to the social stigma of siring lost eggs.

Strong Back

Cost: 3 pts.

Availability: Anyone

Your character is exceptionally strong when it comes to heavy lifting. Add one dot to the character's Strength solely for purposes of determining how much she can lift or carry. The added Strength does not apply for any other purpose.

Strong Lungs

Cost: 3 pts. (2 pts. for Western mortals and Water-aspected Dragon-Blooded)

Availability: Anyone

Your character can hold his breath for (Stamina x 60) seconds, plus an additional 60 seconds for every success on a (Stamina + Resistance) roll.

Social Merits

These Merits improve the character's use of Social Attributes.

Born to Rule

Cost: 2 pts. (1 pt. for Dragon-Blooded characters and un-Exalted scions of Dynastic families)

Availability: Anyone

Some characters wear authority as easily as a comfortable, well-worn jacket. A character possessing this Merit is accustomed to giving commands and expecting them to be obeyed without question. Whether your character has worked hard for the authority she asserts or was to the manor born, the result is the same. The character gains a one-die bonus to all social rolls made against an acknowledged inferior (such as a subordinate within an organization or merely a social inferior). While the Storyteller is the final authority on when this Merit applies, mortals of the Blessed Isle are almost always considered the social inferiors of even the most recently Exalted Dragon-Blooded, while outcastes are usually considered inferior to Dynasts.

Carouser

Cost: 2 pts.

Availability: Anyone

Your character knows how to party and how to best present himself to fellow party-goers. The character gains a two-die bonus to all social rolls made to influence, charm or seduce others in the context of any party less sophisticated than a formal cotillion—whether in a raucous Northern bar, a Nexus orgy or the drunken initiation party for a newly Exalted Dragon-Blood. The character also gains a two-die bonus to all (Stamina + Resistance) rolls made for him to resist the effects of consuming too much alcohol or other recreational drugs at the party. At the Storyteller's discretion, this two-die bonus may also apply to any rolls relevant to sexual performance in the context of the party.

Enchanting Features

Cost: 2 pts. or 4 pts.

Availability: Anyone

Your character isn't necessarily good-looking, but she has a special allure that others find nigh irresistible. With the two-point version, the character gains a two-die bonus on all social rolls designed to seduce another person who is capable of becoming sexually attracted to her. Additionally, the limit on the maximum dice bonus that a character gains from having a higher Appearance than the target of her social attacks increases by one. If the target of the seduction has a higher Appearance, it reduces by one any penalty inflicted on the character with this Merit.

The four-point version renders the character preternaturally alluring. She gains a four-die bonus on all social rolls against those who are normally capable of becoming attracted to her. Against a character whose sexual orientation is not compatible with her gender, the character gains no dice bonus but ignores any dice penalties resulting from the target's orientation. Also, the limit on the maximum dice bonus acquired from having a higher Appearance increases by three, and the character ignores any penalty for having a lower Appearance when trying to seduce someone better looking than herself.

Innocuous

Cost: 2 pts. or 4 pts.

Availability: Appearance 2 (no higher, no lower)

Your character is neither beautiful nor ugly, but instead plain… remarkably so. Everything about your character's appearance is perfectly normal and typical of the average member of the society from which he hails. As a result, it is more difficult for those who have encountered the

character to remember anything about him. With the two-point version, the character gains a one-die bonus on all Larceny and Stealth rolls made for him to blend into a crowd. The difficulty of any casual pursuit or investigation of the character increases by one.

With the four-point version, the character's normalcy rises to the level of a form of supernatural occlusion. Remembering anything more than the most superficial details of the character after an encounter with him requires a successful (Wits + Essence) roll. The base difficulty for this roll is 6, reduced by one for every significant encounter the observer has had with the character over the last week (to a minimum of 1). If this roll is successful, the observer pierces the character's anonymity and remembers him clearly for one week. At the end of that time (and at the end of each subsequent week in which she has had no contact with the character), the observer's player must again roll (Wits + Essence) against a difficulty equal to the number of weeks since the two have last interacted. Failure on this roll indicates that the observer has forgotten all details about the character.

A character with the four-point version of this Merit has serious difficulties in establishing long-term ties in mortal society. Such a character may never have more than two dots in Allies, Contacts or Mentor unless those Backgrounds are defined as representing magical beings (who are immune to the effects of this Merit). The character may never possess any dots in Command, Cult, Followers, Henchmen or any other Background that require that he be widely known in mortal society.

The effects of Innocuous do not stack with any Charm or magical effect that conceals identity. Only the most powerful effect applies. Sidereals may not purchase either version of this Merit, as they are already protected by Arcane Fate.

Silver Tongue

Cost: 3 pts.
Availability: Manipulation 2+

Your character is a skilled con artist and inveterate liar. The character's player gains a two-die bonus to all Manipulation rolls based on deliberate deception.

Mental Merits

These Merits augment Mental Attributes and Abilities that rely on them.

Acute Sense

Cost: 2 pts. (for hearing or vision) or 1 pt. (for touch, taste or smell)
Availability: Anyone

One of your character's senses is especially perceptive. Acute Sense functions as a sense-specific specialty for the Perception Attribute. Each time the Merit is purchased, the character gains a one-die bonus to Perception-based rolls that involve a specific sense (hearing, smell, taste, touch or vision). This Merit may be purchased up to three times, either granting up to a three-die bonus to a single sense or granting lesser bonuses to different senses.

Common Sense

Cost: 1 pt.
Availability: Anyone

Your character has an inner voice that warns her when her present course of action is unwise or dangerous, a voice that sounds remarkably like that of the Storyteller. Whenever the character prepares for a course of action that is objectively a bad idea (and especially when it is a *very bad* idea), the Storyteller will warn the character's player of the danger he has apparently failed to see. The Storyteller is obliged only to warn the player. Nothing prevents a stubborn or bull-headed character from doggedly pursuing a course of action that a more reasonable character would avoid.

Note: This Merit is most appropriate for the characters of inexperienced players.

Eidetic Memory

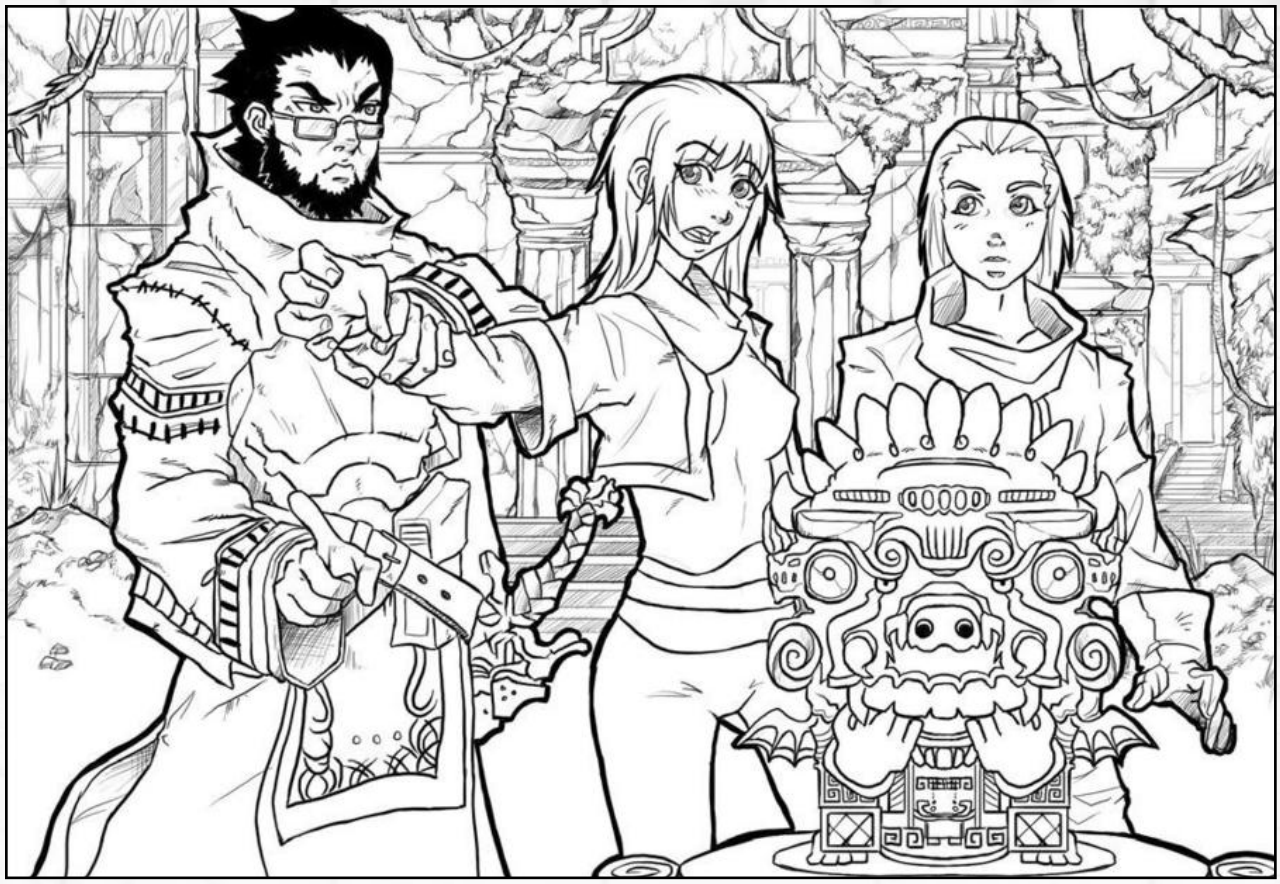
Cost: 3 pts.
Availability: Anyone

Your character has a remarkable memory and is able to recall anything she has ever observed with picture-perfect clarity. She can recognize someone by a whiff of perfume, repeat verbatim an epic poem first heard years earlier or recognize a specific person from among a crowd of hundreds. Generally, there is no roll to recall anything the character has ever experienced. Yet, if the character either attempts to recall something while under stress or tries to remember some detail she first observed during a stressful situation, the player must roll (Intelligence + Awareness), with a difficulty assigned by the Storyteller based on the level of stress involved. If the character with Eidetic Memory has a low Intelligence, the Storyteller may allow the substitution of Wits instead.

Esoteric Craft

Cost: 1 pt.
Availability: Anyone

Your character may purchase dots in one of the exotic Craft Abilities normally not permitted for her. For example, Sidereal Exalted have access to Craft (Fate), an Ability usually not permitted for non-Sidereal characters. Similarly, Abyssal Exalted have access to Craft (Necrotech), which is likewise forbidden for those not associated with the Underworld. Your character has somehow gained a measure of knowledge in such forbidden lore and may begin play with dots in one of these esoteric crafts. This Merit may be taken multiple times, with each Merit applying to a different Esoteric Craft.



Please note that this Merit only allows the character to *begin* play with a rating in the chosen Craft. It does not allow her to increase her rating in it. For that, the character must have some other appropriate trait (most commonly, the Mentor, Patron or Library Backgrounds) to justify such training.

Note: Usually, Exalted automatically gain the benefit of this Merit, but as an optional rule, the Storyteller may require Exalted characters to purchase Esoteric Craft in order to use Craft Abilities not normally associated with their milieu.

Experienced

Cost: 1–3 pts.

Availability: Heroic mortals only

Your character is older than most typical starting characters, and with age comes experience and insight. Such experience manifests as additional Ability dots that represent a lifetime of training, study or just surviving life in the Age of Sorrows. But the passing of years brings with it the debilitating effects of age. Each dot of the Experienced Merit grants five additional bonus points that can be spent only on Abilities (whether Favored or non-Favored). In exchange, the character must sacrifice one of the Attribute dots granted during character creation per Merit dot as well. At the Storyteller's discretion, in lieu of sacrificing an Attribute dot, the character might be required to take four points of Flaws that might be logically associated with aging instead. Extra bonus points gained through such age-related Flaws will not count against the normal 10-point cap on bonus points gained through Flaws.

As a general rule, each dot of Experienced adds 20 years to the character's starting age (which, for heroic mortals, normally defaults to somewhere between 20 and 30). A player may choose for his character to be as old as he wishes, though, without sacrificing Attributes for Abilities through this Merit. Such a character will be remarkably fit for her age but will not be as knowledgeable or well trained as an experienced character with this Merit would be.

If the Storyteller's ultimate intention is for the character to receive Exaltation, she should not allow this Merit and instead require the player to take the Diminished Attribute Flaw.

Extra Favored Ability

Cost: 2 pts.

Availability: Sidereals, Dragon-Bloods, any un-Exalted character

Your character possesses a preternatural aptitude for some Ability. For two points, the character may acquire

one Favored Ability (in addition to any normally gained through character creation), which follows all the normal rules for Favored Abilities with regard to bonus and experience point costs. A mortal character may never have any non-Favored Ability rated higher than any Favored Ability. This Merit may be purchased multiple times, with each Merit representing a different Ability. No character may have more than five Favored Abilities, however, so a Sidereal may not purchase more than one extra Favored Ability (since Sidereals acquire four through character creation), while a Dragon-Blood may not purchase more than two. Typically, heroic mortals begin with one Favored Ability and may purchase this Merit up to four times.

Internal Compass

Cost: 1 pt.

Availability: Anyone

Your character has an intuitive sense of direction. She can automatically orient herself according to the cardinal directions without effort, and she gains a one-die bonus on all navigation rolls made for her, whether to pilot a ship or to find her way through a maze. If your character is native to some realm of being other than Creation (such as the Underworld, Malfeas or the Wyld), she can choose the power to navigate that realm instead of Creation.

Jack of All Trades

Cost: 4 pts.

Availability: Mortals only

Your character has a remarkably broad background of knowledge and experience that allows him to function in nearly any realm of human activity. Normally, if a mortal character does not possess at least one dot in an Ability called for by a roll, her player suffers a two-die penalty on that roll. The player of a character with this Merit ignores this limitation and can roll her character's full dice pool when the character attempts an action for which she is untrained. Furthermore, even if the character has no dots in Lore, she is presumed to be literate in her native tongue.

There are two limitations to the utility of this Merit. First, the character may not use Jack of All Trades to communicate in a language if she has not acquired fluency in that language through either dots in the Linguistics Ability or the Linguistic Genius Merit. Second, the normal penalty applies when the character attempts an action that calls for one of the more esoteric uses of the Craft Ability, such as Craft (Fate) or Craft (Gossamer) unless she has the Esoteric Craft Merit.

Linguistic Genius

Cost: 1–5 pts.

Availability: Linguistics 1+

Your character has a knack for picking up additional languages, more so than his Linguistics rating might indicate. For each dot taken in this Merit, the character is familiar with one additional language. A character may not purchase more dots in this Merit than the lesser of his Intelligence or his Linguistics. By default, the character can neither read nor write in any of the extra languages acquired through the Merit. For each dot of Lore the character has, however, he can choose to be literate in one extra language.

Prodigy

Cost: 5 pts.

Availability: Anyone

Your character has a supernatural aptitude for a particular Ability. The character may improve his puissance with any of his Favored Abilities (whether he acquired a Favored Ability normally through character creation or through the Extra Favored Ability Merit) or any of his Caste Abilities (in the case of Exalted). This increased aptitude reduces the experience point cost for increasing a Favored or Caste Ability to (rating x 1). The character also gains a one-die bonus on all uses of the Ability. This Merit may be purchased more than once, with each purchase applying to a different Favored or Caste Ability. The character may not, however, purchase this Merit more times than the lesser of his Intelligence or Wits.

Spiritual Merits

These Merits affect the functioning of the character's Willpower and Virtues.

Driving Passion

Cost: 3 pts.

Availability: Conviction 3+

Each character possesses a Motivation that defines the character's principle goal in life. For some characters, however, a Motivation is not merely an aspiration as much a zealous crusade. If your character has the Driving Passion Merit, the intensity with which she pursues her Motivation actually aids her in fulfilling it. Whenever the character takes any action in direct furtherance of her Motivation that requires a dice roll, her player gains a two-die bonus to the roll. Note that each Driving Passion is specific to a Motivation—if a character fulfills her Motivation completely, her Driving Passion ceases to exist.

Paragon of [Virtue]

Cost: 3 pts.

Availability: [Virtue] 3+

Your character is a font of Compassion, a bastion of Conviction, a wellspring of Temperance or a tower of Valor. There are four Paragon of [Virtue] Merits, one for each Virtue. A character who is a paragon of one of these Virtues has the potential to raise that Virtue one dot higher than normal, whether at character creation or with experience. For most characters, Virtues are capped

at 5, but a character with this Merit raises that cap to 6. If a character already has a Virtue cap higher than 5 for whatever reason, this Merit raises the cap by one additional dot. The Merit does not actually provide any additional dots in the Merit, which must be paid for normally. Also, even if a character raises a Virtue to 6 or higher, she can never have a Willpower rating higher than 10. A Paragon character has the option of rolling the Virtue associated with this Merit every morning to recover Willpower in place of Conviction.

True Love

Cost: 4 pts. (5 pts. for Abyssal Exalted)
Availability: Compassion 3+

Your character has a deep and abiding romantic relationship with another character (which may be a player's character or a Storyteller character). The object of the character's affection must be someone for whom he has an Intimacy, but she need not possess a reciprocal Intimacy for the character. Even true love can be unrequited. This Merit effectively raises the character's Intimacy to the level of a secondary Motivation. In social combat, the character gains a +3 bonus to MDV against social attacks that seek to turn him against his Intimacy. He suffers a -3 MDV penalty, however, against attacks that play on his emotional attachment (such as threats to harm the lover or attempts to make the character jealous). Whenever the character performs any action that reaffirms his love, such as saving his lover from harm or performing some grand romantic gesture, he regains Willpower just as if he performed an action in furtherance of his Motivation. Finally, as long as the character is in the presence of his lover, his player has the option of rolling the character's Compassion every morning instead of his Conviction for Willpower recovery.

Abyssal Exalted, due to the emotionally cauterizing nature of their Exaltations, rarely experience the power of True Love. For an Abyssal to acquire this Merit, the player must pay an additional point for it.

Virtue Specialty

Cost: 2 pts., 4 pts. or 6 pts.
Availability: [Virtue] 3+

A loving mother becomes ferocious in protecting her children. A chaste priest turns his nose up at even the most seductive temptresses. A mighty demon-hunter proves herself utterly fearless in the face of horrific Yozi spawn. In some specific situation, your character is able to rely on one of his Virtues more than other characters of weaker spirit could. Essentially, this Merit functions like a normal specialty, but it applies to a Virtue instead of an Ability. The player must define a specific situation in which his character's moral fiber is made of sterner stuff. Whenever that situation arises and the character channels the appropriate Virtue, he gains a dice bonus to the roll. For two points, the Merit confers a one-die bonus; for four points, it confers a two-die bonus; for six points, it confers a three-die bonus. As with normal Ability specialties, the player can purchase this Merit multiple times, but he cannot acquire more than three Virtue specialties per Virtue. He may purchase a single specialty up to a three-die bonus, or he may take multiple specialties in a single Virtue as long as the total number dice bonus associated with that Virtue does not exceed three.

There is a downside to this Merit, however. The bonus gained from a Virtue specialty also applies to Virtue rolls appropriate to it, even if the Virtue roll is one the player wishes to fail. For example, if a character has the specialty of Valor (Demons 3), he gains a three-die bonus whenever he channels his Valor to fight demons. He also gains a three-die bonus on Valor rolls triggered by the presence of demons, however, which might prevent him from simply fleeing from a powerful demon who is obviously too much for him to handle. Successes gained from rolling bonus dice on Virtue rolls have all their normal effects, including Limit gain. As with Ability specialties, the Storyteller may veto any proposed Virtue specialty she deems to be too broad in scope.

Background Merits

These Merits modify the functioning of the character's Backgrounds.

Cache

Cost: Variable
Availability: Resources 4+ or Salary 2+

Generally, the Resources Background presumes that a wealthy character's income is tied to a specific location and that if she gets too far from her personal domain, she will be unable to access the full scope of her wealth. This rule also applies to Sidereals and to other characters who possess a Salary, although that Background places intrinsic limits on how readily a Sidereal can exercise his Salary in Creation (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Sidereals**, pp. 104–106). A character with this Merit has overcome the geographic limitations on wealth by establishing financial connections with business entities across Creation, whether through the Guild, through Dynastic banking interests or through other means.

Your character can access the full benefit of her Resources or Salary in locations far from her home. Of course, this money might not be immediately available. Small villages, for example, rarely have enough money on hand to satisfy a Resources 4 request. Yet, unless the character is lost on the Great Ice or wandering the Southern Wastes, she can usually get whatever funds she needs within a few weeks at most. The range of the character's financial connections determines the Merit's cost as follows:

Cache (1 pt.): The character can access her full Resources or Salary if she is within 500 miles of her home.

Cache (2–4 pts.): For each additional point, the character names one major city in the cardinal direction (including the Blessed Isle as a direction) in which she resides. The character can access her full Resources and Salary if she is within 500 miles of each of these cities.

Cache (5+ pts.): Beginning at the five-point level, the character can access her full Resources and Salary anywhere in the cardinal direction where she resides. With each additional Merit point, she may add one additional cardinal direction. Thus, at the nine-point level, the character may access her full Resources or Salary anywhere in Creation.

Favor

Cost: Variable

Availability: Anyone

Your character is owed a debt from some powerful or influential personage, and he can use this debt as leverage to gain benefits. As a practical matter, this Merit represents a short-term version of either the Mentor or Allies Background. The character can call upon his debtor to perform a service comparable to those granted by the aforementioned Backgrounds, but once the marker is called in, the Merit is lost. The value of this Merit is based on the type of favor the debtor owes the character.

Base Merit Cost	Favor
1 pt.	**Minor boon.** The debtor is obligated to perform some task that might occupy a few days of her time but exposes her to no significant risk.
2 pts.	**Moderate boon.** The debtor is obligated to perform some task that represents a serious inconvenience but is not life threatening.
3 pts.	**Major boon.** The debtor owes a major boon to the character, and fulfilling it could involve a substantial risk of injury.
4 pts.	**Life debt.** The debtor owes her life to the character. This debt can only be cancelled by either saving the character's life or by performing any major request of the character's choice, no matter how time consuming or dangerous.

The default assumption is that the debtor is the equivalent of either a three-dot mentor or ally. Add one to the cost of this Merit if the debtor is equivalent of a four-dot mentor or ally. Add two if the debtor is equal to a five-dot mentor or ally. Terrestrial gods always count as four-dot allies for purposes of this Merit, while Celestial gods always count as five-dot allies.

Once the character calls in his marker and the debtor satisfies her obligations, this Merit ceases to exist. A character may choose not to call in the debt for its full value and instead ask for minor favors for an extended period of time. Generally, a character owed a favor may ask for the benefits of a favor costing two or more points less once per session, and he may call upon the benefits of a favor costing one point less once per story. For example, if the debtor is a Dragon-Blood who owes a life debt to a character, he can ask her for a minor or moderate boon once per session or for a major boon once per story. Once he asks for a favor that is equal to the life debt, however, the Merit is lost.

The benefits of this Merit are not enforced magically, and a debtor could renege on her obligations. Generally, in order to refuse a favor requested from a character whom the debtor owes, the debtor's player must roll Conviction and get no successes. Add one additional die to the Conviction roll for each level by which the requested favor is less than the debt owed. That is, if the character asks for a minor boon from someone who owes him a life debt, add three dice to the roll. If the character appeals to the debtor's sense of honor through social combat, his successes on the social attack may add dice to the Conviction roll as well. The Storyteller may add even more dice to the roll if the debtor would face social opprobrium for refusing to fulfill such a debt or if she is from a culture that places particular emphasis on repaying such debts.

Heir Apparent

Cost: 1–5 pts.

Availability: Anyone

Your character holds a place of importance in somebody's will. This benefactor could be the character's mentor but does not have to be. For each point put into this Merit, the character will receive two Background points at some point in the future to be applied as the player wishes, although no Background can be raised above five dots. The player and Storyteller should decide when the Merit is purchased exactly what bequests the character will receive. Naturally, the Storyteller will determine when the benefactor will ultimately meet her demise unless, of course, the character takes steps to facilitate that end in order to secure his inheritance more quickly.

In addition to the Background points conferred directly by this Merit, the player may gain one additional Background point for each major condition the character must fulfill in order to stay in his benefactor's good graces. For example, the character might be required to graduate from the House of Bells with honors in order to receive his inheritance or to be married (or unmarried) at the time the

will is read or simply to spend a night in the benefactor's creepy old mansion. The player may not gain more than three extra bonus points from conditions placed on the character. Finally, an heir apparent is considered to owe his benefactor an obligation (per the Flaw on pp. 68-69) equal to (his rating in this Merit – 2). Failure to fulfill that obligation could result in disinheritance.

Generally, an heir apparent is most likely to receive tangible bequests in the form of artifacts, land, manses, resources or followers (usually slaves). He might receive more unusual benefits with a little creativity, however. For example, inheriting controlling interest in a business might confer contacts or allies, while a necromantic artifact bequeathed to an Abyssal might also increase her Whispers rating.

Heirloom

Cost: 1 pt.

Availability: Anyone

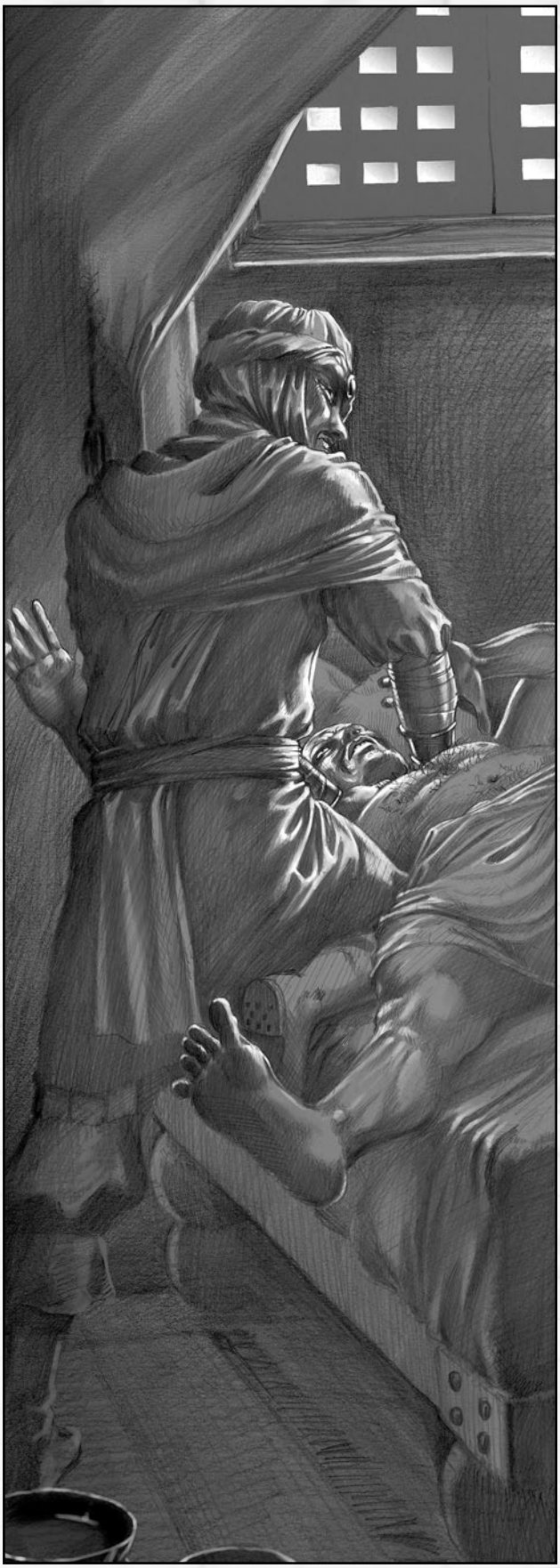
Your character has a single expensive item that his Resources rating is insufficient to justify, such as an exceptional weapon or suit of armor, a large plot of land with a manor house or even a well-trained concubine slave. Regardless of the Resources cost of the item, this Merit costs only one point. The heirloom need not have actually been part of an inheritance. It could just as easily have been something acquired in a heist or won in a high-stakes card game. An heirloom may never be magical, as such items fall under the Artifact Background. The character has the option of selling the item, if he can, but doing so should not raise his Resources by more than one dot without Storyteller approval, and Storytellers should be wary of players who abuse this Merit to gain a high Resources rating on the cheap. Any attempt to sell an heirloom should be a significant part of the series itself, as most of these items have a story all their own, as well as a host of individuals who would kill to possess them.

Hidden Manse

Cost: 1 pt. or 2 pts.

Availability: Manse 1+

Generally, any Essence-wielding character can intuitively sense the presence of a manse or demesne by perceiving the ambient Essence flows, and even mortal thaumaturges can identify such valuable real estate by studying local dragon lines. Yet, whether through cunning geomancy or simply through quirks of Essence, some demesnes and manses conceal themselves from detection. For one point, your character has control over a demesne that naturally conceals itself from detection by others. For two points, she possesses a manse of any level that does the same. The character and her allies must still be discreet in their comings and goings, as ostentatious displays of power near a hidden manse might expose its location.



Note: More expansive rules for manse construction, including mechanisms for concealing a manse from detection, appear in **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex** on pages 44–79. This Merit is presented for the benefit of players and Storytellers without access to that supplement.

Combat Merits

These Merits affect the character's skill at armed and unarmed combat and also with tactical strategy.

Brutal Attack

Cost: 2 pts. or 4 pts.
Availability: Strength 3+

Your character specializes in brutal crushing attacks in close combat, relying on overwhelming power in place of focus and sophistication. When making a Melee or Martial Arts attack, the character has the option of replacing his Dexterity with his Strength in calculating the attack pool. A character can use this option on mundane Martial Arts attacks, but he cannot use it on attacks augmented by any Martial Arts Charm other than an Excellency. If a martial artist character purchases this Charm as a four-point Merit, however, he can make such an attack with any style customarily based on blunt direct attacks rather than finesse, such as the various "Hero Styles."

Danger Sense

Cost: 3 pts. or 5 pts.
Availability: Anyone

Your character has a knack for sensing treachery and other impending dangers. For three points, a two-die bonus is gained on all Perception-based rolls for the character to detect ambushes, traps and other hidden dangers and also on Join Battle rolls. For five points, the character in addition never loses his Dodge DV as a result of surprise, though he can lose his Parry DV if he does not have a weapon drawn. Furthermore, his player adds three dice to all rolls for the character to evade hidden dangers (such as a [Dexterity + Athletics] roll for the character to catch onto the edge of a pit trap and avoid falling in).

Favored Weapon

Cost: 2 pts.
Availability: Anyone with a specialty in the relevant combat Ability appropriate to the weapon

Your character has trained for so long with a specific weapon that it has become a part of her. Whether it is an ancestral sword, an artifact goremaul from a previous life or the boomerang she's practiced with since childhood, the character and her weapon move as one. In the character's hands, a favored weapon adds one to its Accuracy and Defense. Whenever the character uses another weapon that calls upon the same combat Ability as her favored weapon, however, it feels wrong in her hands, as if she is betraying a loved one. This unease inflicts a -1 penalty to the Accuracy and Defense of her replacement weapon. A character can have only one favored weapon at a time, and if it is permanently lost or destroyed, this Merit immediately converts into a two-point Flaw that inflicts the penalty described above until the character rids herself of it.

Improved Join Battle

Cost: 1–3 pts.
Availability: Anyone

Your character can smell an oncoming battle as easily as others might scent the smoke from a slow-building fire. Each point invested in this Merit adds a one-die bonus to the character's Join Battle rolls.

Quick Draw

Cost: 2 pts. or 4 pts.
Availability: Melee 3+

At the first sign of danger, your character's hand moves to the hilt of his blade or the grip of his flame piece, and the two become one. For two points, your character reduces the flurry penalty for drawing a weapon and attacking with it on the same tick by one per attack. For four points, your grace is supernatural in its fluidity. You can draw a weapon reflexively and suffer no flurry penalty on your attacks after doing so.

Tactical Instincts

Cost: 3 pts.
Availability: War 2+

Whether watching pieces glide across a Gateway board or observing the clash of armies on a battlefield, your character has an intuitive grasp of the ebb and flow of combat. A prodigy at military tactics, the character can easily discern the enemy's plans and spot the enemy's weak points. In mass combat, after the character observes the enemy's tactics for a single long tick, her player may roll (Wits + War) as a simple action. Each success on this roll goes into a pool of bonus dice the player can add to the attacks of any unit of which her character is the commander or of which she is a special character (provided that she has the opportunity to communicate her observations to the commander). No more than three bonus dice may be added to a single attack. When the entire pool is expended, the player can roll (Wits + War) again and gain a new bonus dice pool, but doing so is a full action that may leave the character's unit exposed if she is the commander.

In addition to its implications for mass combat, this Merit grants the character a natural brilliance at games of strategy such as Gateway. As a reflexive action, a character with Tactical Instincts involved in such a game may review the board, and the player may roll (Wits + War), putting any successes into a pool that may be used on subsequent

rolls made during the game. Again, no more than three bonus dice may be added to any single roll.

Supernatural Merits

These Merits represent magical or similarly special characteristics.

Alternative Divination

Cost: 1 pt.

Availability: Occult 1+

Astrology is, by far, the most common form of divination available in Creation, since the destiny of Creation is, quite literally, written in the stars. Yet, other divination techniques exist, though they all use the same basic format as the Art of Astrology (see **Exalted**, p. 138). Normally, the Art of Astrology is treated as a thaumaturgy Art with four main rituals: Compile Chart, Lesser Divination, Divination and Greater Divination. Alternative Divination techniques work exactly the same in all respects except that the preliminary ritual, Compile Chart, is replaced with some other ritual appropriate to the divinatory style used. Some of the more common styles are described here, along with their preliminary rituals.

Note: In addition to the four aforementioned rituals, additional rituals associated with the Art of Astrology may be found in **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**, pages 132–133. With the Storyteller's permission, a player may adapt some or all of these subsidiary rituals to an alternative divination method as well.

Crystallomancy: *Scry Crystal* (0, Perception, 2, 10 minutes). The character must spend 10 minutes meditating on a crystal with a minimum Resources value of 2. Within the reflecting facets of the gemstone, the character sees the patterns of future events. Some characters rely on scrying orbs instead. A scrying orb is a smooth glass ball about one foot in diameter. In the modern era, any competent glassmaker can fashion a scrying orb at a cost of Resources 2. Some antique scrying orbs have a greater pedigree, however. If the player purchases a scrying orb as a one-dot artifact for her character, she may gain a two-die bonus on the scrying roll. Her insights gleaned from the crystal or orb allow for further divination rituals.

Haruspicy: *Read Entrails* (0, Perception, 2, one hour). The character must ritually sacrifice an animal and then spend time studying its entrails. If the animal is expensive, add a one-die bonus for each point by which the animal's Resources cost exceeds one dot. Success gives the character insight into the weave of destiny sufficient to allow for further divination.

Oneiromancy: *Interpret Dream* (0, Intelligence, 5, one full night's sleep). The character is gifted with precognitive dreams that foretell future events. The character rarely has any choice over what he chooses to dream about, but by spending one Willpower before retiring for the night, he can ensure that he has a precognitive dream. After awakening, he must then record the events he saw in this dream and attempt to interpret them. The hazy, abstract nature of precognitive dreaming makes such interpretation difficult, and the normal difficulty for dream interpretation is 5. If the character also has the Lucid Dreamer Merit, however, this difficulty is reduced to 3.

Palmistry: *Study Palm* (0, Intelligence, 5, one minute). A fairly weak form of divination more closely associated with carnival hucksters than with true seers, palmistry is the practice of reading a person's future by studying the lines in his palm. The palmist must study her subject's hand for one minute in order to gain sufficient insight to tell his future through further divination rituals. Although simple, quick and cheap, palmistry is not terribly reliable, as can be seen from the base difficulty of 5 for the Study Palm ritual.

Sortilege: *Toss Bones* (0, Wits, 3, five minutes). Common among Icewalker tribes, sortilege refers to divination through the casting of lots or bones. The character must spend five minutes in meditation while shaking a container full of ritually prepared animal bones. She then tosses the bones on the ground at her feet. Success allows the character to see the pattern that Creation has laid out for observation, a prerequisite for further divination rituals.

Awakened Essence

Cost: 4 pts. or 7 pts.

Availability: Mortals only

Through some means—be it years of meditation or exposure to Wyld energies or a dark pact with the Yozis—your character has acquired the power to perceive and manipulate Essence. Your character gains an Essence pool equal to (Essence x 10), all of which is considered Personal Essence. He can spend one-third of his Essence pool freely. To use the rest, he must spend one Willpower point in each scene in which he wishes to access the remainder of his Essence. A character with Awakened Essence can increase his permanent Essence with bonus points or experience. The character regains Essence at the same rate as an Exalt. He can attune to artifacts normally, but he never gains a magical material bonus from artifact weapons or armor. He can also attune to a manse or demesne just like an Exalt.

The four-point version of this Merit duplicates the benefits of the Enlightened Essence blight (see **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld**, p. 148). At the seven-point level, the character can freely access his entire Essence pool without spending Willpower.

Holy Mien

Cost: 7 pts.

Availability: Compassion 3+ and Conviction 3+

Your character's enlightened soul, tranquil mind and natural piety surround him with an aura of holiness that is inimical to creatures of darkness. You gain a four-die bonus on all rolls made for the character to affect lesser creatures of darkness through magical means. This bonus also applies to Presence rolls made to intimidate or threaten such beings, but not to any other mundane roll. Creatures affected by the character's holy mien include First Circle demons, ghosts, Demon-Blooded mortals, Infernal Exalts, Abyssal Exalts and lesser spirits of corruption. More powerful entities, such as Second and Third Circle Demons or Deathlords are immune to the Holy Mien, as are Infernal and Abyssal Exalted whose Essence ratings are more than three dots higher than that of the character.

A character with this Merit automatically gains the one-point version of the Priest Merit and reduces the cost of the seven-point version of it to six points. Teodozjia and other entities that are innately opposed to holy beings are drawn to characters with a holy mien and are naturally hostile toward them.

Legendary Breeding

Cost: 3 pts.

Availability: Breeding 5

Unheard of in the First Age and extremely rare in the modern era, the blood of the Dragons runs so purely through your character's veins that even other Dragon-Blooded are impressed… and occasionally frightened. The character effectively has Breeding 6, which confers the following benefits.

- +6 motes to Personal Essence
- +11 motes to Peripheral Essence
- Reduce the cost of activating the character's anima banner by three
- Add three to the roll to determine whether the character's children Exalt
- Add a one-die bonus on all social rolls against other Dragon-Blooded and against mortals taught to respect and fear the Dragon-Blooded.

In addition to these benefits, the character suffers one drawback: It is so patently obvious that she is a Dragon-Blood that the difficulty of any attempts to pass as a mortal increases by two.

Lucid Dreamer

Cost: 3 pts.

Availability: Anyone except Fair Folk and Fae-Blooded

When your character dreams, she is aware of it and can even influence the nature of her own dreams. As a result, she is immune to any supernatural effects that might attempt to influence her dreams or harm her through them, including the dream-manipulating powers of gods, demons and Fair Folk. In addition, if the character possesses the Alternative Divination (Oneiromancy) Merit, the base difficulty for her to interpret her own prophetic dreams is reduced to 3.

Luck

Cost: 1–5 pts. (1–3 pts. for Sidereals)

Availability: Anyone

For whatever reason, your character is favored by the Loom of Fate such that he is protected by chance and good fortune. For each level of this Merit, the character gains a "luck pool." A point of luck may be spent to reroll any failed (or even botched) roll made for the character save for a roll that botches through the operation of the Eclipse Caste oath or a similarly powerful curse. The character can even apply multiple luck points to a single roll until he gets the desired result or until he runs out of luck points. Spent luck points return at a rate of one per week that has passed without the character calling upon his luck pool. The luck pool refreshes completely between stories.

In addition to its reroll properties, the character can use his luck to influence the outcome of a game of chance or any other *completely random* event. As a general rule, each point of luck spent in this manner increases the odds of a favorable result by 10 percent. For example, if the random event is a coin toss with a 50-50 chance of coming up heads, the Storyteller should roll one die, adding one to the result for each luck point spent, with the coin landing favorably to the character on a result of 6 or higher.

Not all Sidereals have the Luck Merit, but those who do are exceptionally lucky. For each level of this Merit taken by a Sidereal, add two to the luck pool, to a maximum pool of five. Thus, by spending one point on this Merit, the Sidereal gains a luck pool of three, while spending three points confers a luck pool of five.

A character may have both the Luck Merit and the Destiny Background with Storyteller approval, and can even combine the two, such as to reroll a failed Destiny roll. A lucky character may also possess the Unlucky Flaw (see p. 74).

Past Lives

Cost: 1–5 pts.

Availability: Anyone (limited for Dragon-Bloods and mortals)

Your character occasionally has flashes of memory from a prior existence, whether they are a Solar's hazy recollections of the glory of the First Age or a mortal's remembrance of a prior existence. For Celestial Exalts, each level of this Merit grants a benefit that corresponds to an increasing recollection of the First Age in terms of technology, society and history. The benefits conferred are as follows:

Merit Rating	Benefit
1 pt.	The character has hazy memories of First Age events, sufficient to perhaps grant clues that are helpful in her current situation.
2 pts.	The character's memories grow clearer. She gains a one-die bonus on all rolls to use First Age technology.
3 pts.	The character begins to recall the day-to-day lifestyle of a First Age citizen. She may now apply her one-die bonus to rolls pertaining to First Age society, customs and history.
4 pts.	The character remembers much of the First Age as if it happened yesterday. Occasionally, she becomes distracted over pleasant memories of a better world and depressed over the fallen state of Creation. She gains a three-die bonus on all rolls pertaining to First Age technology, lore and society.
5 pts.	The character recalls scenes and vignettes from across the entire history of the First Age, from the Primordial War through the Usurpation. She gains five dice to all appropriate rolls. Unfortunately, such powerful memories are often overwhelming, and many characters who remember the so vividly are at risk for the Throwback Flaw (see p. 74).

A Dragon-Blooded or mortal character may possess this Merit up to only the two-point level. Even at that level, though, it does not confer any benefit to using First Age technology. Dragon-Bloods and mortals live mayfly lives compared to the Celestial Exalted and almost never recall anything from before the life that preceded the character's current one. Instead, such a character may draw insight from the hazy memories of a recent past life. Also, at the two-point level, the character may add a one-die bonus to a single Ability roll once per session (with the bonus representing a flash of insight from how a prior life would have handled the situation).

The Storyteller may decide on the nature and circumstances of the character's flashbacks, or she may allow the player to determine the character's prior history. The former method allows the Storyteller to dole out information as needed in order to facilitate the plot. The latter method makes the player more invested in the spiritual heritage of his own character and may provide for a richer narrative environment. Ultimately, the actual memories conferred by this Merit (as opposed to

any mechanical benefits) function as plot devices and a background element.

Note: The benefits of this Merit are redundant to anyone who has access to the Savant Background (such as Sidereals and the Green Sun Princes).

Priest

Cost: 1 pt. or 7 pts. (or free or 6 pts. for characters with the Holy Mien Merit)

Availability: Anyone

Your character is a priest of a particular deity or within a particular organized religion. (Zenith Caste Solars, No Moon Caste Lunars, Midnight Caste Abyssals and all Sidereals regardless of caste automatically gain the benefits of the one-point version of this Merit for free. Green Sun Princes automatically gain similar benefits by virtue of being priests of the Yozis.) When making prayer rolls, the character's player reduces the difficulty of the roll by one (to a minimum of 1). Also, at the Storyteller's discretion, the character may receive dreams or omens sent by her patron deity.

The seven-point version of the Merit means that the character is a favored priest of the deity in question. The character regularly receives prophetic dreams or even waking visions from the deity. He can also call upon the deity to grant miracles in response to prayer. The roll is a standard prayer roll (Charisma + Performance), but the character must either spend a point of Willpower for an automatic success or to channel a Virtue. Some of the more commonly sought miracles (and the successes needed to receive them) are as follows:

Divine Guidance: The character receives a sign or portent advising him on the course of action he should next take. The clarity of the sign increases with more successes.

Essence Recovery: The character recovers two motes per success on the prayer roll.

Exorcism: The character can exorcise a possessing spirit from another if his player garners a number of successes equal to (the spirit's Essence + 3). The priest's patron deity must also have a higher Essence than the possessing spirit.

Healing: The character can heal a dying character up to the Incapacitated level with five successes, but the priest must also have sacrificed Resources 4+ on the prayer roll.

Warding: A priest character who worships one of Creation's deities can pray for protection from creatures of darkness. If the deity grants this benediction, the priest may divide the successes between the area of protection (10 yards per success) and the strength of the ward (which will bar any creature of darkness from entering the area whose Essence is not greater than the successes spent on strength). Conversely, a priest character who serves some dark power such as the Yozis or the Deathlords may instead ward an area against the following creatures of light: gods loyal to the Unconquered Sun, Solar Exalted and all Exalted of any type who know even one Charm with the Holy keyword.

Willpower Recovery: The character recovers one spent Willpower point per every two successes on the prayer roll.

If a priest wishes to make a sacrifice in conjunction with her prayer but does not have anything of sufficient value, she may promise her patron that she will make a suitable offering at the earliest opportunity. The deity may accept such a promise (at the Storyteller's discretion), but the Resources value of the promised sacrifice is halved for purposes of calculating the difficulty of the prayer roll, and patrons who accept deferred payment will not answer any further prayers until the promised sacrifice is made. Any spirit may perceive the mark of the priest's patron deity in the priest's Essence patterns, and such markings are also visible to All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight and other forms of Essence sight. Exalted who are naturally one-point priests by virtue of Exaltation need pay only six bonus points to acquire the seven-point version of this Merit. Whenever such an Exalt prays for a miracle, her caste mark shines brightly and obviously.

Root of the Perfected Lotus

Cost: 1 pt.

Availability: Awakened Essence, Essence 3+ and Martial Arts 5

Your character has been initiated into the mysteries of supernatural martial arts and can learn Terrestrial Martial Arts Charms from a sifu. He might even know such Charms (if purchased with bonus points) already, but he cannot learn new Charms without a teacher. A Terrestrial Martial Arts Charm costs 15 experience points for a mortal (12 if Martial Arts is a Favored Ability). At character creation, such Charms cost eight bonus points (six if Martial Arts is Favored).

Additional information on heroic martial artists may be found in **Scroll of the Monk**, beginning on page 17.

Sorcery Focus

Cost: 5 pts. (or 4 pts. for Twilight Caste Exalted)

Availability: Any Exalt capable of learning Terrestrial Circle Sorcery

This Merit denotes a singular focus on the part of a sorcerer for the study of his magical art. A character with this Merit halves all bonus/experience point costs and training times for learning new sorcery spells. Yet, the character also *doubles* the bonus/experience point costs and training times for all Charms except for Ox-Body Technique and Charms for which Terrestrial Circle Sorcery or Celestial Circle Sorcery is a prerequisite.

This Merit normally costs five points, but is reduced to four points for Twilight Caste Solars. Daybreak Caste Abyssals and Defiler Caste Infernals *do not* get the price break associated with Twilights. Characters capable of learning Shadowlands Circle Necromancy, however, may purchase a functionally identical Merit called Necromancy Focus that applies to necromancy spells and for which Daybreak Abyssals need pay only four points. Among Green Sun Princes, the corresponding Merit is called Infernal Sorcery Focus, which costs only four points for Defilers and five points for all other Infernal Sorcery initiates.

Mortals—even those with the Terrestrial Circle Sorcery Merit (or its necromancy equivalent)—may not take this Merit.

Special Sense

Cost: Variable

Availability: Anyone

Your character has access to a special form of perception other than the normal five senses, or perhaps a modification of an existing sense. Examples of possible special senses include:

Echo Location (2 pts.): The character is able to see in total darkness like a bat by giving off sub-audible signals and listening as they bounce off nearby objects. This power also functions underwater.

Essence Sight (5 pts.): The character can easily perceive dragon lines and Essence flows and track them with a successful (Perception + Awareness) roll. She can look at an Essence wielder and see how much Essence he still has available, but when she tries to use this power against a Night Caste Solar, a Day Caste Abyssal or a Scourge Caste Infernal, she suffers an external penalty equal to the Exalt's permanent Essence. The character can intuitively sense the presence of nearby manses and demesnes (provided they are not shielded from discovery), as well as the presence of magitech with built-in Essence batteries. Essence Sight does not allow the character to perceive dematerialized spirits or ghosts, however. Despite its name, this sense is not necessarily a visual one. Some characters can hear, smell or even taste ambient Essence.

Spirit Sight (6 pts.): The character may automatically see dematerialized ghosts, spirits and demons without the need for a roll.

Telepathy (7 pts.): The character can hear the surface thoughts of anyone he observes. He can understand these thoughts regardless of the target's native language, but he cannot comprehend the thoughts of inhuman creatures such as demons, Fair Folk, Dragon Kings or other similar races. In order to use this power, the player must successfully roll (Intelligence + Awareness) with a -1 internal penalty for every point of Intelligence the target has above the telepathic character. If the target is aware of the attempted telepathic intrusion, she can attempt to block the telepath, with her player rolling (Wits + Lore) as a resisted roll against the telepath. Both rolls can be assisted by stunts and by channeling Virtues. Finally, although telepathy is not intrinsically associated with the Wyld, it is treated as a Shaping effect for purposes of Charms that resist Shaping effects. Thus, Integrity Protecting Prana, for example, absolutely protects a Solar Exalt from telepathic intrusion from this Merit.

Thermal Sight (2 pts.): The character can see patterns of heat, allowing him to see in darkness by the reflection of his own body heat, to track the still-warm footprints of those who have recently passed through or to spot a smoldering campfire at night from miles away.

Vibration Sense (2 pts. or 5 pts.): The character can sense vibrations as they pass through solid objects. He can easily hear a conversation in the next room as if there were no walls in the way, and he can detect the location of nearby moving objects by feeling the vibrations in the ground from their passage. At the two-point level, this sense extends for (Perception + Awareness) yards. At the five-point level, it extends for ([Perception + Awareness] x 100) yards.

Weather Sense (1 pt.): The character can intuitively sense changes in the local weather, anticipating the weather patterns over a number of days equal to the successes rolled on a (Perception + Awareness) roll.

Taint's Warning

Cost: 2 pts. for Solars. 1 pt. for Abyssals and Green Sun Princes.

Availability: Solars, Abyssals and Green Sun Princes

A Solar character with this Merit has the intuitive ability to sense creatures of darkness, which is defined to include the following: demons, undead, Infernal Exalted, deathknights, Deathlords and anyone else whom the Storyteller classifies as a creature of darkness. Some akuma may be detected by this Merit, but unfortunately, many of them are skilled at hiding their demonic natures. Whenever a creature of darkness comes within (permanent Essence x 10) yards of the Solar, her caste mark automatically (and possibly unwillingly) lights up at a cost of one mote. If the Solar's anima is at the 4+ range, her caste mark activates at no cost. Regardless, the Solar instantly senses that something unwholesome is nearby, something that is utterly inimical to the Unconquered Sun. The Merit *does not* reveal the nature or identity of the threat, however.

For Abyssal Exalted and Green Sun Princes, this Merit has been altered by the nature of their Exaltations. Instead of detecting creatures of darkness, the Merit detects creatures of light, which are defined to include:

Solars, Lunars, Sidereals, celestial lions or any other direct servants of the Incarnae.

Terrestrial Bloodline

Cost: 1 pt.

Availability: Anyone with less than Essence 4 (excluding all Dragon-Blooded)

The blood of the Dragons is strong and often persists in offspring for generations to come. Your character, while not a Dragon-Blood, is descended from one and carries within her the potential to breed Terrestrial Exalted offspring. When a character with this Merit mates with another character who does not possess it, roll one die for each resulting offspring. On a 1, the child will eventually Exalt as a Dragon-Blood. On a 2 or 3, the child will not Exalt, but will inherit this Merit. With any other result, the bloodline does not extend to the child and his own future offspring (unless the blood of the Dragons reenters the family line at some point in the future). If a character with this Merit mates with another mortal who carries it, any issue will Exalt on a roll of 1, and those who do not Exalt will automatically possess this Merit. If the character mates with a Dragon-Blood, add one to the Dragon-Blooded's Breeding to determine the likelihood of any children Exalting. (See **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Dragon-Blooded**, pp. 105–106, for an explanation of the functioning of the Breeding Merit.)

Celestial Exalted may possess this Merit and have the same likelihood of siring Dragon-Blooded children as any mortal. Once the Exalt has achieved Essence 4, however, his children will become Half-Castes instead of Dragon-Blooded, and this Merit is lost.

Terrestrial Circle Sorcery

Cost: 10 pts.

Availability: Mortal with awakened Essence, Essence 3+ and Occult 5+

With this Merit, your character has been initiated into sorcery and can learn and cast spells of the First Circle. She can then learn any spells associated with that circle at a cost of 15 experience points (12 if Occult is a Favored Ability) or eight bonus points (six if Occult is Favored) just as if she had learned the appropriate initiation Charm. Any spells cast by the character follow the normal rules for casting actions, and the character must spend a Willpower point in order to cast any spell.

A character may begin play with a functionally identical Shadowlands Circle Necromancy Merit instead, but she may not possess both versions of the Merit.

Stunt Merits

These Merits improve the character's ability to use stunts and generally demonstrate her coolness.

Daredevil

Cost: 4 pts. (3 pts. for mortals)

Availability: Anyone

Fortune favors the bold, often to an improbable degree. Your character has incredible skill at defying the odds, especially when death is on the line. By spending one Willpower, the character can double the stunt dice awarded for any physical action with a difficulty of 3 or higher. A character can spend Willpower to gain the benefits of this Merit as well as gaining an automatic success or channeling a Virtue, and the character need not declare his use of this Merit until after the Storyteller has determined the roll's final difficulty. This Merit does not affect the number of motes or Willpower recovered after a successful stunt, nor does it double the extra stunt die awarded by Signature Style if that Merit is also applicable to the situation. The cost of this Merit is one less for mortals because a mortal's heroism in the face of overwhelming odds is all the more impressive for his lack of magic.

Signature Style

Cost: 2 pts.

Availability: Anyone

The character's natural flair and competence shines in one particular endeavor. A signature style is essentially a specialty that applies to stunts. If the character performs a stunt that is appropriate to his signature style, he gains a one-die bonus. A character may take this Merit up to three times, but a single stunt may never gain more than a one-die bonus no matter how many signature styles it arguably fits within. The dice bonus does not affect the number of motes or Willpower points the character recovers for a successful stunt.

Examples of possible signature styles include: "Performing the Impossible," "Invoking Pants-Wetting Terror," "Shocking Brutality," "Effortless Grace" and "Peerless Skill."

As always, the Storyteller is the final arbiter of whether a particular stunt fits within the parameters of the signature style, and she also has final authority on whether a signature style is too broad to be acceptable as a specialty.

Flaws

Physical Flaws

These Flaws interfere with the functioning of Physical Attributes and associated Abilities.

Amputee

Cost: Variable

Availability: Anyone

Your character is missing one or more limbs, most likely as a result of some prior accident, injury or crip-

pling attack. Alternatively, one or more limbs has been rendered useless, such as a withered arm resulting from polio or a limb that has been permanently paralyzed due to injury. In particular, many Charms that carry the Crippling keyword can inflict this Flaw on a character if the Charm's effect is a permanent one. The cost of the Flaw varies according to the nature of the debility.

Missing One Hand (2 pts.): The character is missing one hand. It is assumed that either the missing hand is the character's off hand or that the character has simply adjusted to using his off hand. Either way, a character with a missing hand suffers no off-hand penalty. A character missing a hand suffers a -4 internal penalty on all tasks that normally require the use of two hands, such as wielding a two-handed weapon or climbing a ladder. If the character has a hook or other mundane prosthesis, the penalty is reduced to -2.

Missing Both Hands (5 pts.): The character is missing both hands. Tasks that call for fine manual dexterity are utterly impossible, but if the character is equipped with hooks or mundane prosthetics, she can attempt such feats at a -4 internal penalty.

Missing One Arm (3 pts.): The character is missing one arm. He suffers a -2 internal penalty on all Athletics rolls due to lack of proper balance, although this penalty may be negated with a creative use of weighted garments or prosthetics. The character also suffers the effects of missing one hand.

Missing Both Arms (6 pts.): The character is missing both arms. He automatically fails all actions involving manual dexterity (absent the creative use of Charms or magic) and suffers a -3 internal penalty on all Athletics rolls involving balance.

Missing One Leg (3 pts.): The character is missing one leg. Normally, she cannot walk or run at all, can barely stand and suffers a -5 penalty on all Athletics checks that require footwork. With a peg leg or prosthetic leg, she can move and dash at half her normal rate and suffers only a -3 penalty on footwork.

Missing Both Legs (6 pts.): The character is missing both legs. He cannot walk under any circumstances, automatically fails all Athletics rolls involving footwork, cannot dash and, if forced to move under his own power, can only crawl at one-third his normal Move rate. A legless character in a wheelchair or cart (either of which is Resources 1) can move and dash, but the movement rate is based on the character's Strength instead of Dexterity.

Quadriplegic (8 pts.): A highly unusual character concept for the Age of Sorrows, the character is either paralyzed

from the neck down or has lost the use of all four limbs. She is incapable of nearly any physical task.

Exalted characters gain less from this Flaw than mortals, since the gods simply do not normally choose crippled characters for Exaltation. The bonus point reward for losing a hand or single limb is reduced by one for an Exalt. For amputations involving two or more limbs, the reward is reduced by two.

Climate Sensitivity

Cost: 2–4 pts.
Availability: Anyone

Your character is acclimated to a particular region of Creation and suffers penalties in other climates. If the character's climate sensitivity is triggered, the character suffers a -1 internal penalty on all actions, and the difficulty of all Survival and Resistance rolls increases by one.

The cost of this Flaw is dependent on how vulnerable the character is to different climates. For two points, the character suffers only in an extreme environment that is the antithesis of his preferred climate (such as a Northerner in the hot desert or a Southerner in the frozen tundra). For three points, the character is uncomfortable in any environment other than his preferred one, including even temperate zones (such as Northerner in any non-cold environment or a Southerner outside of the desert). For four points, the character is limited to one specific geographic region and cannot even endure areas that are climatically similar but not identical. Most often this is due to environmental conditions of which the character might not even be aware until he tries to leave (such as a Southeastern jungle dweller who sickens when not regularly exposed to the pollen of the indigenous trees or a Westerner from the Neck who cannot stomach water that tastes different from the well in his village).

The Storyteller should veto any form of climate sensitivity that would apply only if the character were to enter an area the story is unlikely to compel him to go. Likewise, a character who has access to Charms or other magic that negates penalties for harsh climates should not be permitted to take this Flaw.

Diminished Attributes

Cost: 3 pts. per Attribute dot
Availability: Anyone

Your character is weaker, slower, more sickly or inferior in some other way to her peers. This debility might be the result of injury, old age, extreme youth, sickness or even some curse inflicted by a powerful magical being. Regardless, the character begins with fewer Attribute dots than the character-creation process would normally provide. For every Physical Attribute dot sacrificed, the character gains three bonus points. Although this Flaw is grouped under Physical Flaws, similar Flaws exist for Mental or Social Attributes, which are identical to this Flaw except for the type of Attribute affected. Unlike the Attributes sacrificed with the Experienced Merit, the character receives fewer bonus points but can spend them on anything instead of just Abilities.

Mute

Cost: 1 pt. or 4 pts.
Availability: Anyone

Your character is unable to speak normally. For one bonus point, the character is simply unable to speak above a whisper, while complete dumbness grants four bonus points. A character with the one-point version automatically fails all Performance or Presence checks that require public speaking but faces no penalty on social attacks as long as his target can hear him, which requires the target's player to succeed on a (Perception + Awareness) roll at difficulty 2.

A character with the four-point version of the Merit automatically fails all Performance or Presence checks based on verbal communication and suffers a -5 penalty on all social attack rolls made for her unless the attack expressly has no verbal component. While there is no universal sign language in the Age of Sorrows, the character and her allies can communicate through an informal sign language if each of them commits one Linguistics slot to it.

Sickly

Cost: 3 pts. or 6 pts.
Availability: Anyone with Stamina 3 or less

Your character either has a weak constitution or is particularly vulnerable to disease or infection. For three points, the character either doubles all healing times *or* doubles the difficulty for all (Stamina + Resistance) rolls to resist disease or infection. For six points, the character suffers both weaknesses. If the character's Stamina rises above 3, this Flaw is lost.

Sun-Seared

Cost: 2 pts., 3 pts. or 6 pts.
Availability: Anyone

Your character is extremely vulnerable to sunburn, most likely because she is an albino, a Wyld mutant or an Abyssal. Treat exposure to direct sunlight as a damaging environmental effect. At the two-point level, direct sunlight inflicts a damage of 1B/hour with a trauma of 3, and the character also suffers a one-die penalty on all rolls. At the three-point level, it inflicts damage of 1B/30 minutes instead, and the penalty increases to two dice. At the six-point level, most commonly found in Abyssals and Wyld mutants, sunlight inflicts 1B/minute and a three-die penalty. Heavy clothing doubles the time interval for environmental damage.

Sterile

Cost: 1 pt. (3 pts. for Dragon-Blooded)
Availability: Anyone

Your character is either sterile or infertile. Some men become sterile as a result of castration, whether from an accident, as a punishment or from being gelded in preparation for becoming a eunuch. This Flaw grants more points to Dragon-Blooded Exalts due to the societal pressure they face to bear children. Many mortals employed by the Lintha pirates carry this Flaw.

Social Flaws

These Flaws adversely affect the functioning of Social Attributes or associated Abilities.

Barbarian

Cost: 3 pts.
Availability: Lore 0

Your character has never learned how to function in civilized society. Of course, reasonable people differ on what civilized means. The Delzahn nobles of Chiaroscuro often view their nomadic, desert-dwelling cousins as barbarians, while Dynasts residing in Chiaroscuro often view the comparatively rustic Delzahn nobility with the same condescension. For the purposes of this Flaw, however, a barbarian is someone who is completely uneducated and almost inept when socializing in polite, genteel society.

The character has no dots in the Lore Ability and may never gain any dots while he possesses this Flaw, which also inflicts a four-die penalty on all rolls made for the character to interact civilly with others in situations requiring education or breeding. The Storyteller is the final arbiter on when this penalty applies, but examples include: not embarrassing oneself at a formal dinner party, negotiating a contract with a Guild operative, finding a particular book in a library or arguing a point of law before a judge.

Child

Cost: 5 pts.
Availability: Anyone

Your character is much younger than typical starting characters. Reduce the number of starting dots received in primary Attributes and secondary Attributes by one each. Reduce the number of starting dots for Abilities by four. Your character cannot begin with an Ability higher than 2 without spending bonus points, and the character suffers a two-die penalty on all social interactions with adults. For two additional points, your character is a very young child and has the equivalent of the Small pox (see

Exalted, p. 288). A very young child suffers a four-die penalty on social attacks against adults.

Dark Secret

Cost: 1–5 pts.
Availability: Anyone

Your character harbors a dark secret that would be disastrous if the wrong person learned it. The exact nature of this secret is left to the player's discretion, subject to Storyteller approval. The value of a dark secret is rated from one to five points, with a one-point secret being a minor one that will trigger a limited amount of public humiliation or opprobrium. A three-point secret represents serious social consequences, such as a past criminal history or bastardy. A five-point secret represents the most serious possible consequences, such as treasonous conduct or illegal dealings with the Fair Folk, Deathlords or Yozis. Such secrets likely deserve the death penalty in the character's culture.

A character with a dark secret also automatically gains an Intimacy toward keeping the secret that can never be lost while the character still has this Flaw, but that is automatically lost if the secret is revealed. If that occurs, the character either gains a number of appropriate, Storyteller-chosen Flaws that would flow naturally from the revelation *or* loses a number of appropriate, Storyteller-chosen Background dots or Merits *or* some combination of the two. For example, the revelation that a trusted Guild member has been embezzling might result in the loss of Backing and Resources or the acquisition of the Enemy or Wanted Flaws.

The number of dots worth of Backgrounds or Merits lost or Flaws gained is equal to twice the value of this Flaw. A Celestial Exalt may not count his Exalted status as a Dark Secret unless the character has specific Backgrounds or Merits that are likely to be lost upon exposure as an Anathema. For example, a character with Backing, Command, Followers or Resources whose Anathema status is revealed might quickly be forced on the run and lose those Backgrounds as a result.

Disfigured

Cost: 3 pts. or 5 pts.
Availability: Anyone except Abyssal Exalted

Your character is hideous, either as the result of some birth defect, mutilation, Wyld mutation or some other reason. For three points, the character has an Appearance of 1 that cannot be raised with bonus points or experience. For five points, his starting Appearance is 0, and he begins with one less dot to spend in Social Attributes. Most other characters will simply look upon him with unbridled contempt, but if you choose to take this Flaw at the five-point level, you may treat your character's Appearance as 5 for purposes of intimidation rolls.

Enemy

Cost: 1–5 pts.
Availability: Anyone

Your character is troubled by a recurring nemesis who constantly seeks to thwart her goals, defeat or humiliate her, or even kill her outright. The enemy need not be utterly hostile, however. A rival who always swoops in to steal the credit for the character's successes (or just the character's girlfriend) before running away laughing can represent an enemy. This Flaw functions as the antithesis of the Allies Background. For every point taken in this Flaw, increase the power of the enemy or rival relative to the character, using the Allies Background as a general guideline. (See pp. 110–111 of **Exalted** as well as page 29 of this book for guidelines on creating ally characters.) Additionally, the enemy or rival is one who, for some reason, cannot simply be killed outright, assuming the character has the means to do so anyway, unless this Flaw has been bought off with experience.

At the beginning of each session, the Storyteller should roll one die. If the result is equal to or less than the rating of this Flaw, the enemy will take some action in the course of that session that will interfere with the character's long-term goals. It is not necessary for the character to interact with her enemy during that session. The enemy might simply send word during a later session to inform the character that he has kidnapped one of her loved ones.

Obligation

Cost: Variable
Availability: Anyone

Your character owes a debt to some powerful or influential personage who uses your indebtedness as leverage to secure your services. This Flaw represents the antithesis of the Favor Merit found on page 56, as your character is the one who owes the favor to someone else. The creditor can call upon the character to act as a henchman or unwilling ally. The value of this Merit is based on the type of favor the character owes.

Base Merit Cost	Favor
1 pt.	**Minor boon.** The character is obligated to perform some task that might occupy a few days of her time but exposes her to no significant risk.
2 pts.	**Moderate boon.** The character is obligated to perform some task that represents a serious inconvenience but is not life threatening.
3 pts.	**Major boon.** The character owes a major boon to the character, and fulfilling it could involve a substantial risk of injury.

4 pts. **Life debt.** The character owes her life to the debt holder. This debt can be cancelled only by either saving the patron's life or by performing any major request of his choice, no matter how time consuming or dangerous.

Once the character satisfies her obligations, this Flaw ceases to exist, but that is far easier said than done. The patron might choose not to call in the debt for its full value but ask for minor favors for an extended period of time instead. Generally, a character under an obligation may be asked for the benefits of an obligation costing two or more points less once per session or the benefits of an obligation costing one point less once per story. For example, if the character is a Lunar who owes a life debt to another, the creditor can ask her for a minor or moderate boon once per session or for a major boon once per story. Once he asks the character for a favor that is equal to the life debt, however, the Flaw is lost.

The effects of this Flaw are not enforced magically, and it is quite possible for a character to refuse to fulfill her obligations. Generally, in order to refuse an obligation requested by the debt holder, the character must roll Conviction and get no successes. Add one additional die to the Conviction roll for each level by which the requested favor is less than the debt owed. That is, if the debt holder asks for a minor boon from a character who owes him a life debt, add three dice to the roll. If he appeals to the character's sense of honor through social combat, the successes on the social attack may add dice to the Conviction roll as well. The Storyteller may add even more dice to the roll if the character would face social opprobrium for reneging on a debt or if she is from a culture that places particular emphasis on repaying one's debts. Lunars, in particular, find it socially unacceptable to deny their obligations, especially life debts.

Mental Flaws

These Flaws adversely affect the function of Mental Attributes and/or Abilities.

Amnesia

Cost: 3 pts. or 7 pts.

Availability: Anyone

Your character begins play lacking all her prior life memories. For three points, the character is missing significant chunks of her memories prior to the start of the series. Perhaps she does not remember the last several years, or perhaps she is a tabula rasa and knows nothing prior to the moment she first awakens in the series. For seven points, the character may or may not remember the majority of her life, at least up to some significant or traumatic event (Exaltation, survival of a near-fatal accident, etc.), but since that point, she has no short-term memory. Whenever the character awakens from sleep or is simply startled suddenly, she forgets everything that happened between that traumatic event and the present. The character's player must roll Conviction against a difficulty of 3 in order to maintain the character's short-term memories every time she takes damage or fails any kind of Valor check. The character automatically forgets everything since the original trauma whenever she awakens from sleep. Neither form of amnesia interferes with Attributes or Abilities in any way. Once a character acquires a new Ability or Charm, she will retain the knowledge of how to use it, but she might not remember she actually has it. As an optional rule, the player may permit the Storyteller to spend some or all of the character's bonus points for her to represent advantages the character does not know about at the start of the series. Obviously, this requires a high degree of trust between player and Storyteller.

Derangement

Cost: 1–3 pts. The first derangement acquired gives 3 pts.; any subsequent derangements grant only 1 pt.

Availability: Anyone

Your character suffers from some type of mental illness that affects his cognitive functioning. Derangements are always active but can be suppressed for a scene with the expenditure of a Willpower point. In addition to any other specific effects of a derangement, all derangements inflict a -3 internal penalty on all social-interaction rolls made for the character against characters who do not share the same derangement(s). Common derangements include:

Depression: The character is in a permanent state of depression and is overwhelmed by sadness and despair. He constantly suffers from the partial control effects of the Heart of Tears Virtue Flaw (see **Exalted**, p. 104).

Glossolalia: When exposed to stress, the character's player must roll Temperance against a difficulty of 3. On a failure, the character begins "speaking in tongues" and loses the ability to verbally communicate with others for the duration of the scene. While under the effects of glossolalia, the character is also highly agitated and finds it difficult to comprehend others or to communicate with them even non-verbally. This derangement is common among shamans, true prophets and characters with the Whispers Background.

Megalomania: The character believes utterly in his own superiority over everyone else he encounters. If defeated or outwitted, he rationalizes his failure as being the results of the incompetence of his allies or through cheating on the part of his enemies. The character's player must roll Conviction and get no successes in order for the character to willingly follow the instructions of another

without either trying to subvert the orders or to take credit for the plan's success.

Multiple Personalities: The character has more than one personality, each of which has a different Motivation and Intimacies (although some Intimacies may overlap, such as when both personalities love the same person). One of the personalities is the primary "true" personality. Each additional personality is keyed to a particular Virtue. When the primary personality either fails a Virtue roll associated with that Virtue *or* channels that Virtue and then fails the roll, the associated alternative personality takes over for the duration of a scene. In addition, the personality that is secondary to the character's can communicate with the character as a Storyteller-controlled character when not dominant. The first alternative personality grants three points, and each additional personality grants one point.

Sadism: The character enjoys cruelty and the infliction of suffering on others. He constantly suffers from the partial control effects of the Deliberate Cruelty Virtue Flaw (see **Exalted**, p. 105).

Short Fuse: The character is easily provoked and becomes overwhelmed by blind rage when threatened in any way. She constantly suffers the partial control effects of the Berserk Anger Virtue Flaw (see **Exalted**, p. 105).

(A player may not choose a derangement that duplicates the effects of his Exalted character's Virtue Flaw.)

Diminished Sense

Cost: Variable

Availability: Anyone

One of your character's senses is weakened in some way, perhaps to the point of nonexistence. The character might be near- or far-sighted, if not completely blind. He could be hard of hearing or deaf as a post. The cost of this Flaw varies according to the nature and severity of the sensory loss. In particular, if the character can overcome the Flaw with Charms or magic, the Storyteller is free to reduce the point value of the Flaw or to veto it.

Hearing (2 pts. or 5 pts.): For two points, the character is hard of hearing. His player suffers a two-die penalty on all auditory Perception rolls made for the character, as well as adding one to the difficulty of all social rolls in loud social situations where he will be unable to hear well. For five points, the character is completely deaf. All auditory Perception rolls made for him automatically fail, and he suffers a -3 internal penalty on all Perception rolls made for the character to spot someone attempting to sneak past with Stealth. The character can read lips if his player successfully rolls (Perception + Linguistics) at difficulty 3 (difficulty 1 if the character has acquired "Lip Reading" as a language with one of his Linguistics dots). Speaking clearly is difficult for a deaf character, whose player suffers a -2 internal penalty on all rolls made for the character that involve oral communication.

Smell (1 pt. or 2 pts for Lunars): The character has no sense of smell and automatically fails all olfactory-based Perception checks. For most characters, such a disability is a minor annoyance at worst. It is more serious for a Lunar Exalt who might otherwise be able to track a quarry by scent if wearing a suitable form.

Taste (1 pt. or 3 pts. for Lunars): The character has no sense of taste and automatically fails all Perception rolls to identify a substance by taste. For most characters, such a disability is frustrating but not seriously debilitating. It is more serious for Lunar Exalted, as the inability to taste interferes with the character's ability to learn new shapes by drinking a creature's Heart's Blood (see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars**, pp. 109–110). Normally, there is no roll associated with the act of drinking Heart's Blood, but the player of a Lunar with this Flaw must successfully roll (Perception + Occult) at a difficulty of 3 in order for the character to do so.

Touch (4 pts.): The character is insensate and automatically fails all attempts to identify anything by touch. The character does not feel pain and halves all wound penalties, but she will also fail to recognize the extent of any injuries suffered unless they are pointed out to her or the character's player succeeds on a (Wits + Medicine) roll. The character is incapable of noticing temperature changes, and the difficulty of Survival rolls to avoid frostbite or heat prostration increases by two. The character is also incapable of feeling physical pleasure, which is profoundly frustrating to characters of low Temperance or high Compassion, although the mechanical effects of this are left to the Storyteller's imagination.

Vision (2 pts., 3 pts. or 6 pts.): For three points, the character has poor vision. If she is far-sighted, her player suffers a two-die penalty on all rolls that involve the character reading small characters or manipulating small objects. If the character is near-sighted, her player suffers a two-die penalty on all Perception rolls made for the character to spot something more than (Perception + Awareness) yards away and a two-die penalty on all ranged attacks. Optometry exists in the Second Age, albeit primitively, and a character who acquires glass or crystal spectacles reduces the benefits of this Merit to two points. Such spectacles cost Resources 4 in the Threshold or the rural Realm; Resources 3 in Nexus, the Imperial City or any other major metropolis; or Resources 2 in Chiaroscuro, the glass capital of Creation.

For three points, the character is blind in, and may be missing, one eye. The player of a one-eyed character suffers a two-die penalty on all vision-based Perception rolls made for the character and a three-die penalty on all

ranged attack rolls made for the character due to his lack of depth perception. Also, an attacker in close quarters may try to attack the character from his blind side. The attacker's player must roll (Wits + Martial Arts or Melee) roll, opposed by (Wits + Martial Arts or Melee) rolled by the character's player. Any successes the attacker gains over the character subtract from the character's DV against the next attack.

For six points, the character is completely blind. Any rolls made for the character based on visual perception automatically fail. The character can attempt a ranged attack on anyone within 100 yards, but suffers a three-die *external* penalty on the attack (and possibly even a higher penalty if, for example, the target is attempting stealth or has access to cover the blind character cannot see). In addition, the character is incapable of reading unless she has some magical or technomagical means of perceiving text. Any character incapable of reading is generally also incapable of studying sorcery or necromancy unless she has a highly dedicated tutor and/or some form of magical auditory instruction device.

Unskilled

Cost: Variable

Availability: Anyone

The character is uneducated and/or untrained in comparison to most starting characters. For each point taken in this Flaw, reduce the number of starting Ability dots by one. (This Flaw is most common among children and those with low Intelligence.)

Spiritual Flaws

These Flaws affect the functioning of the character's Virtues or Willpower.

Code of Honor

Cost: Variable

Availability: Conviction 3+

Your character has a highly developed sense of personal honor that restricts her ability to break her word or to act dishonorably. The cost of this Flaw is determined both by how strict the code is and how strongly the character believes in it. For one point, your character is incapable of lying to anyone toward whom she has an Intimacy or betraying an Intimacy in any way unless her player first fails a Conviction roll. For two points, your character feels this way about anyone she considers an ally. For three points, she is honest to a fault and can neither lie to nor betray anyone who is not actively an enemy. For five points, the character is incapable of lying to anyone without her player first failing a Conviction check. For six points, the character is a total pacifist and may not attack another living being without her player first failing a Conviction check. For each additional point added to the Flaw's base price, add a two-die bonus to all appropriate Conviction rolls.

In addition to the aforementioned effects, if the character also owes an obligation (per the Flaw) to someone else, add this Flaw's rating to all Conviction rolls made to renege on the debt. If the player rolls successes but wishes her character to violate the code of honor anyway, she must spend Willpower points equal to the cost of this Flaw (rounded up) in order for the character to do so.

Intolerance

Cost: Variable

Availability: Anyone

Your character has an irrational dislike for some class of people. Common triggers for intolerance include the very poor, the very rich, people with Wyld mutations or members of social groups opposed to the character's own social group (such as a citizen from a nation with whom the character's people are at war). Uncommon triggers for intolerance include clowns, elementals, demons or people from distant lands. The cost of this Flaw is determined first by whether the trigger is a commonly encountered type of being or not. For three points, the character has an intolerance with a relatively common trigger. When the character encounters the trigger, his player must successfully roll Compassion against a difficulty of 3 lest the character become immediately hostile to the hated person. While active, an intolerance inflicts a three-die penalty on all social actions taken by the character against the other person except for intimidation. The player may spend one Willpower to ignore the effects of a failed Compassion roll for the scene. For each additional point gained from this Flaw, the difficulty of the Compassion roll increases by one, as does the Willpower cost of ignoring the intolerance. If the triggering class of individual is not often encountered (meaning that the Flaw will be less of a hindrance to the character), reduce the base cost of the Flaw by two. The Storyteller can veto any intolerance on the grounds that the trigger is too rare to come up in the series.

Nightmares

Cost: 1–5 pts.

Availability: Anyone

Your character suffers from crippling nightmares that deprive him of sleep and leave him emotionally exhausted during the day. Whenever the character attempts to sleep, the Storyteller should roll one die. At the one-point level, the character wakes up screaming during the night, and regains no Willpower the next morning, if the roll comes up 1 or 2. For each additional point gained from this Flaw, increase the range of the roll that results in a nightmare by two. At the three-point level, for example, the character will have a nightmare on a roll of 1 to 6. Additionally, if subjected to dream-manipulating Charms or powers

employed by gods, demons or Fair Folk, the character's player suffers an internal penalty equal to the Flaw's rating on any rolls to resist, and the character suffers a similar penalty to any applicable DV.

Phobia

Cost: Variable

Availability: Anyone

Your character is irrationally afraid of some person, place, thing or condition of being. Common triggers for phobias include heights, enclosed spaces, spiders, drowning or public speaking. Uncommon triggers for phobias include clowns, being buried alive, public nudity or shellfish. A phobia's cost is determined first by whether the trigger is a commonly encountered phenomenon or not. For three points, the character has a phobia with a relatively common trigger. When the character encounters the trigger, the character's player must successfully roll Valor against a difficulty of 3 lest the character be forced to flee the scene or otherwise panic. If the character is forced to remain near or interact with the trigger, the phobia inflicts a dice penalty on all relevant rolls made for the character equal to the total cost of this Flaw. The player may negate this effect for a scene by spending one Willpower. For each additional point gained from this Flaw, the difficulty of the Valor roll increases by one, as does the Willpower cost to ignore the phobia. If the trigger is an uncommon one (meaning that the Flaw will be less of a hindrance to the character), reduce the base cost of the Flaw by two. The Storyteller can veto any phobia on the grounds that the trigger is too rare to come up in the series.

Vice

Cost: Variable

Availability: Anyone

Your character is addicted to some vice. Common vices include alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling or even accepting dares. Uncommon vices include sex with demons or Fair Folk or imbibing exotic drugs such as bright morning. A vice's cost is determined first by whether the trigger is a commonly encountered phenomenon or not. For three points, the character has a vice with a relatively common trigger. When the character encounters the trigger, the character's player must successfully roll Temperance against a difficulty of 3 lest the character surrender to the chosen vice. The player may spend one Willpower to have the character ignore the effects of a failed Temperance roll for a scene. For each additional point gained from this Flaw, the difficulty of the Temperance roll increases by one, as does the Willpower cost to ignore a vice. If the trigger is an uncommon one (meaning that the Flaw will be less of a hindrance to the character), reduce the base cost of the Flaw by two. The Storyteller can veto any vice on the grounds that the trigger is too rare to come up in the series.

Weak-Willed

Cost: 2+ pts.

Availability: Anyone

Your character's will is less developed than those of other characters. For every two points gained from this Flaw, reduce the character's permanent Willpower (as determined by the sum of his two highest Virtues) by one.

Supernatural Flaws

These Flaws interfere with the character's Essence, Charms and other magical traits.

Beacon of Power

Cost: 4 pts.

Availability: Any Exalt except Night Caste Solars, Day Caste Abyssals and Scourge Caste Infernals

Your character finds it difficult to hide her Exalted nature. The character has only one Essence pool equal to the sum of what would normally be her Personal and Peripheral pools. All of the character's Essence is considered Peripheral for purposes of anima displays.

Greater Curse

Cost: 1–5 pts.

Availability: Celestial Exalted, Green Sun Princes and Abyssal Exalted

If your character is a Solar, Lunar or Sidereal, he is more prone to Limit Break. For each point gained from this Merit, the character's Limit pool decreases by one. If the character has this Flaw at the three-point level, he experiences Limit Break when he acquires seven points of Limit instead of the normal 10. If the character is an Abyssal, his Resonance pool is reduced instead, and if he is a Green Sun Prince, his Infernal Limit pool is similarly reduced. Players of Sidereal Exalted may choose to apply the effects of Greater Curse to the character's Paradox pool instead of her Limit pool, but only one or the other. The player may not divide a Greater Curse between the two pools.

Oathbound

Cost: Variable

Availability: Anyone

Your character has sworn some oath or accepted some taboo in exchange for power. Many priests and holy men swear oaths as signs of their devotion to their deities, and the deities in question bless their followers with magically conferred benefits as long as that oath remains fulfilled. The severity of the oath's requirements is directly proportional to the number of points gained.

Minor Oath (1 pt.): An oath that barely restricts the character at all—never accept food from a red-headed person, never use bladed weapons, pray to your god once per day.

Moderate Oath (3 pts.): An oath that impedes the character, but not in any life-threatening way—no sex outside of marriage, never eat pork, pray several times per day at specific intervals, never start a fight.

Major Oath (5 pts.): An oath that interferes with the character's life in a major way—never cut your hair, remain completely celibate, never use any weapons, spend at least one hour of every day in meditation, strict vegetarianism.

Legendary Oath (8 pts.): An oath that severely limits the character's lifestyle—never bathe, embrace total pacifism, reject all forms of physical pleasure, never consume food or drink other than rice and water, spend at least six hours every day in meditation.

Unlike most Flaws, a player who imposes an oath on her character must specifically note what traits the bonus points gained were used to acquire, like so: *Complete celibacy, Major (5 pts), +1 Conviction, 1-pt. Priest.* If the character ever violates the oath, he loses the benefits associated with the oath until he has made suitable atonement. This atonement will generally take a number of months of contrition and penitence equal to the Flaw rating, as well as a sacrifice with a Resources cost of the Flaw rating or some other suitable, Storyteller-chosen form of repentance. In addition, at the Storyteller's discretion, violations of major or legendary oaths may also result in divine punishment of some sort, such as the infliction of a Flaw or curse of some kind under which the character must labor until he has received forgiveness.

A character may have multiple oaths (but never more than one legendary oath). While multiple oaths may stack, if the character has more than one oath that interferes with the same general area of life (combat, dietary restrictions, sex, prayer, etc.), each oath after the first suffers a cumulative -1 reduction in value. For example, a character who has sworn never to start a fight and to fight only barehanded would gain five points for the major oath but only two points instead of three for the moderate oath. The Storyteller should not allow the player to select multiple oaths if one embraces the other. For example, it would be inappropriate for a character to swear a moderate oath to never start a fight when he has already sworn a legendary oath of total pacifism. Likewise, the player should not be allowed to stack an oath to never eat shellfish on top of an oath of strict vegetarianism.

Permanent Caste Mark

Cost: 2 pts. (1 pt. for Sidereals and Green Sun Princes)

Availability: Celestial Exalted, Abyssal Exalted and Green Sun Princes

Your character's caste mark is permanently visible on his forehead. The mark does not glow unless the character spends Peripheral Essence, and unless it glows, it can be

concealed with a thick headband or some other kind of headgear. The caste marks associated with Solars, Lunars and Abyssals are well known from Immaculate teachings and appear, at best, to be blasphemous tattoos. The symbolism behind the Sidereal caste marks is less well known due to the Sidereals' efforts to conceal their own history. For Sidereals, this is only a one-point Flaw. The Green Sun Princes have taken similar steps to conceal their characteristics.

Throwback

Cost: 1–5 pts.

Availability: Celestial Exalted, Abyssal Exalted and Green Sun Princes

One of a character's past lives exerts a powerful and unhealthy influence over him. When this Merit is selected, the player and Storyteller must jointly define the personality of one of the character's past lives, include her Motivation and Intimacies. When the character finds himself in a situation that would tend to evoke the past life's Motivation or Intimacies, roll the character's Willpower against a difficulty equal to his Essence. If the roll fails, the character is overwhelmed by the emotions of the past life and must act according to her Motivation and Intimacies instead of his own. This is considered a form of unnatural mental influence that lasts for a number of hours equal to the Flaw's rating. The character can act against the externally imposed Motivation and Intimacies for one scene by spending a Willpower point. He can overcome it completely by spending a number of Willpower points equal to the Flaw's rating. The Storyteller is free to veto any past life concepts that are not sufficiently in opposition to the character's normal goals. Examples of acceptable past life concepts include: a Gold Faction Sidereal who was previously a Bronze Faction member, or vice versa; an Abyssal or Infernal Exalt who was previously a staunch enemy of the Neverborn or Yozis; an aggressively chauvinistic he-man who was previously a demure young female, or vice versa.

Green Sun Princes who possess the Past Life Background (as opposed to the Past Life Merit on pp. 60-62) often suffer a condition similar to Throwback as a result of being overwhelmed by their memories of the Usurpation era. A Green Sun Prince who has this Flaw will have a *third* Motivation and set of Intimacies to represent a past life other than the one associated with her Past Life Background. Most likely, the Prince's last Solar incarnation suffered from this same Flaw, which has been carried through to the current life.

Unlucky

Cost: 1–5 pts. (+2 pts. if the character's bad luck can spread to others)

Availability: Anyone

The character is plagued by bad luck and is considered a jinx by those who know him well. For each level of this Flaw acquired, the Storyteller adds one point to a "bad luck pool" that can be used against the character. Whenever the character's player succeeds on a roll, the Storyteller may choose to spend one point of bad luck to force him to reroll. The Storyteller may continue to spend bad luck points to force rerolls on the same roll, if she wishes, until the roll fails or she runs out of bad luck points. The dice pools, target numbers and difficulties for any rerolls are exactly the same as for the original roll, even taking dice modifiers such as Excellencies into account.

The Storyteller can also spend bad luck points to negatively influence the outcome of a completely random event such as a coin toss or anything similarly random that involves the character. Normally, such events are resolved by rolling a single die with results of five or less being unfavorable to the character. For every bad luck point spent, the Storyteller can reduce the result of this die roll by one. The bad luck pool recovers one point per week that the character has gone without suffering a jinx and refreshes at the end of every story. A character *can* have both the Lucky Merit and the Unlucky Flaw, and both can affect the same roll.

Although the bad luck pool may not exceed five, if the player adds two to the cost of the character's Flaw, he becomes a jinx to those around him. The Storyteller gains the option of spending bad luck points not just to thwart the character, but to inflict ill fortune on his allies. The Storyteller can spend bad luck points to force a reroll of *any* character who is an ally of the unlucky character provided that the dice roll represents an action taken in the unlucky character's immediate presence.

Weak Essence

Cost: 6 pts.

Availability: Anyone who would otherwise have Essence 2+ (excluding all Dragon Kings)

Your character suffers from stunted magical development. If the character is an Exalt or some other type of character who would normally begin with Essence 2 or higher, her starting Essence is reduced by one and may not be improved with bonus points. This means that Exalted characters begin with only Essence 1, which will severely limit Charm selection. This Flaw is particularly appropriate for newly Exalted characters, and with the Storyteller's approval, the player may choose not to fill all of her character's Charm slots during character creation, instead reserving some Charms for later after she has raised her Essence. The character need not pay experience for Charms acquired later to fill these slots, but the rules for training times still apply. Dragon Kings may not purchase this Flaw because an Essence 1 Dragon King is feral and unsuitable for play.

Background Flaws

These Flaws interfere with the proper functioning of Backgrounds.

Damaged Artifact

Cost: 1–3 pts.

Availability: Anyone with an artifact rated at least one dot higher than the Flaw rating

The character possesses an artifact that is either damaged or not fully functional. At the one-point level, an artifact suffers one of the following defects:

- -1 to Accuracy, Damage or Defense of any weapon
- +1 to Rate of any weapon
- Reduce Range by 25 percent for any ranged weapon
- -1 to the bashing and lethal soak of armor or from its Hardness
- +1 to fatigue value or mobility penalty
- For any other type of artifact, roll one die whenever the item is used. The device will fail to function properly on a 1.

At the two-point level, spend six points to negatively affect the traits of an artifact weapon or armor according to the preceding list. With any other type of artifact, roll one die whenever the item is used. It will fail to function on a 5 or less. At the three-point level, the artifact is completely unusable but is still potentially valuable if repaired or simply sold to gullible collectors.

As a practical matter, the most common use of this Flaw is to reduce the starting cost for common artifacts that are often damaged by the ravages of time. For example, a grand daiklave is normally Artifact 3. With this Flaw, it may be purchased as a two-dot artifact with one point lost from its normal traits or as a one-point artifact with six points lost. The ruined remains of a four-dot artifact cost only one Background or bonus point with this Flaw.

Known Anathema

Cost: 7 pts. (4 pts. for Lunars)

Availability: Solars, Lunars, Abyssals and Infernals

Your character is widely known to be an Anathema. The Wyld Hunt is aware of her existence and might have already sent assassination squads against her in the past. Worse, the Bronze Faction of the Sidereal Exalted considers her a threat to its agenda and searches the Loom of Fate constantly for any sign of her. Whenever the character spends enough Essence to trigger an iconic anima banner, roll one die. If the result is equal to the character's Essence or less, the Wyld Hunt will begin pursuit within one month at most. On a roll of one, the Wyld Hunt will already be active in the area and will begin pursuit within one day.

Additionally, the character's Exalted status makes it more difficult for him to acquire certain Backgrounds. Specifically, a character who is a known Anathema must pay double for Allies, Backing, Contacts, Followers and Resources, whether at character creation or with experience. This penalty does not apply to Lunar Exalts, who can easily acquire such Backgrounds through false identities with a judicious use of shapeshifting. Accordingly, Lunars gain only four bonus points for this Flaw.

Note: The Storyteller may veto this Flaw if the story is set in at the edges of Creation where the Wyld Hunt is unlikely to reach.

Wanted

Cost: 1–5 pts.

Availability: Anyone

Your character is on the run from the law. Whether he is a criminal, an escaped slave, an innocent falsely accused of a crime or even someone who testified against the Guild, the character is on the run from someone and faces a fearsome penalty. Even if the character flees the area, he must still fear bounty hunters or wanted posters bearing his likeness. The Storyteller should feel free to veto this Flaw if he has it in mind for the series to quickly take the character far away from the place where he is wanted, however.

At the beginning of each session, the Storyteller should roll one die. If the result is equal to or less than (the Flaw's rating + 2), the character's wanted status will somehow interfere with her activities, perhaps through a city guard recognizing her or an ally betraying her for a bounty reward. In addition, being wanted impacts the character's ability to acquire certain Backgrounds. The character must pay double both at character creation and with experience for Backing, Cult, Patron, Resources and Sifu, and a wanted character may never have Command.

Ward

Cost: 1–5 pts.

Availability: Anyone

Your character has been charged with the welfare of another person, usually a young person for whom the character serves as a mentor. A ward might represent the character's own child (whether biological or adopted), the young disciple of martial arts sifu or the apprentice of a thaumaturge or a master thief. The character must have an Intimacy for his ward, and this Intimacy may not be removed until this Flaw is bought off. Additionally, the ward very often gets into trouble or otherwise complicates her mentor's life. At the beginning of each session, the Storyteller should roll one die. If the result is equal to or less than (the Flaw's rating + 2), something happens involving the ward that distracts or endangers the character. The ward might be kidnapped by an enemy or accidentally insult a visiting dignitary or decide to "impress" her mentor by running off solo to perform some dangerous mission.

FAKA KUN! FAKA KUN, WAIT!
YOU'RE NOT LEAVING, ARE YOU? WE JUST GOT HERE. YOU HAVEN'T EVEN EATEN.
I'LL BE FINE, KIRA. AND YOU WILL TOO. ALL OF YOU.
I'LL BE BACK ONCE IN A WHILE, BUT YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
SOUTH. I NEED TO FIND DEMETHEUS.
HE AND I NEED TO FINISH A CONVERSATION.

CHAPTER FOUR
CRAFTED RACES

At the height of their First Age power, Creation's Lawgivers performed experiments on human beings to produce servitors who would possess unique abilities. Some of these creations were designed for colonization, to tame the distant winds of the North, to monitor the savannas of the South or to dwell in the great ocean of the West. In a more extreme case, the Djala were modified from an already diminutive race into creatures known as minikins. (The entire Djala people lost their previous identity and were viewed purely as minions whose sole purpose in life was to adjust Essence technologies and perform other delicate tasks such as spying, surgery and the mining of rare minerals.) Many of these crafted races developed a sufficient breeding population, or were successful enough—and thus supported by their Exalted overlords—to establish cities and colonies, and to form a homogenous culture or cultures. They were able to comfortably coexist with the baseline human population of Creation, with both uniting in servitude to their Exalted masters.

The Usurpation changed everything, and the Great Contagion added the finishing touches. Many of the crafted races died defending their Solar and Lunar creators and masters. Others were slaughtered later as the Dragon-Blooded imposed their peace upon Creation. The survivors who still had viable breeding populations were reduced still further by the Contagion, dying just as easily as the normal humans did. In the modern day, only a few diminished remnants survive of the previous great variety of races created by the Exalts of the First Age. The mighty cities of the Northern people of the air are fallen, and the Wyld has closed over many of the undersea metropolises of the West. The people of the dunes are pitiful and deadly murderers and cannibals, and the Djala are slaves.

But they do survive. And perhaps, with Creation in the throes of change, the crafted races will find themselves once again able to prosper and grow and stand equal with the humans from whom they were created.

Crafting Races

In the first centuries after the end of the Primordial War, the Celestial Exalted celebrated their victory as the victory of

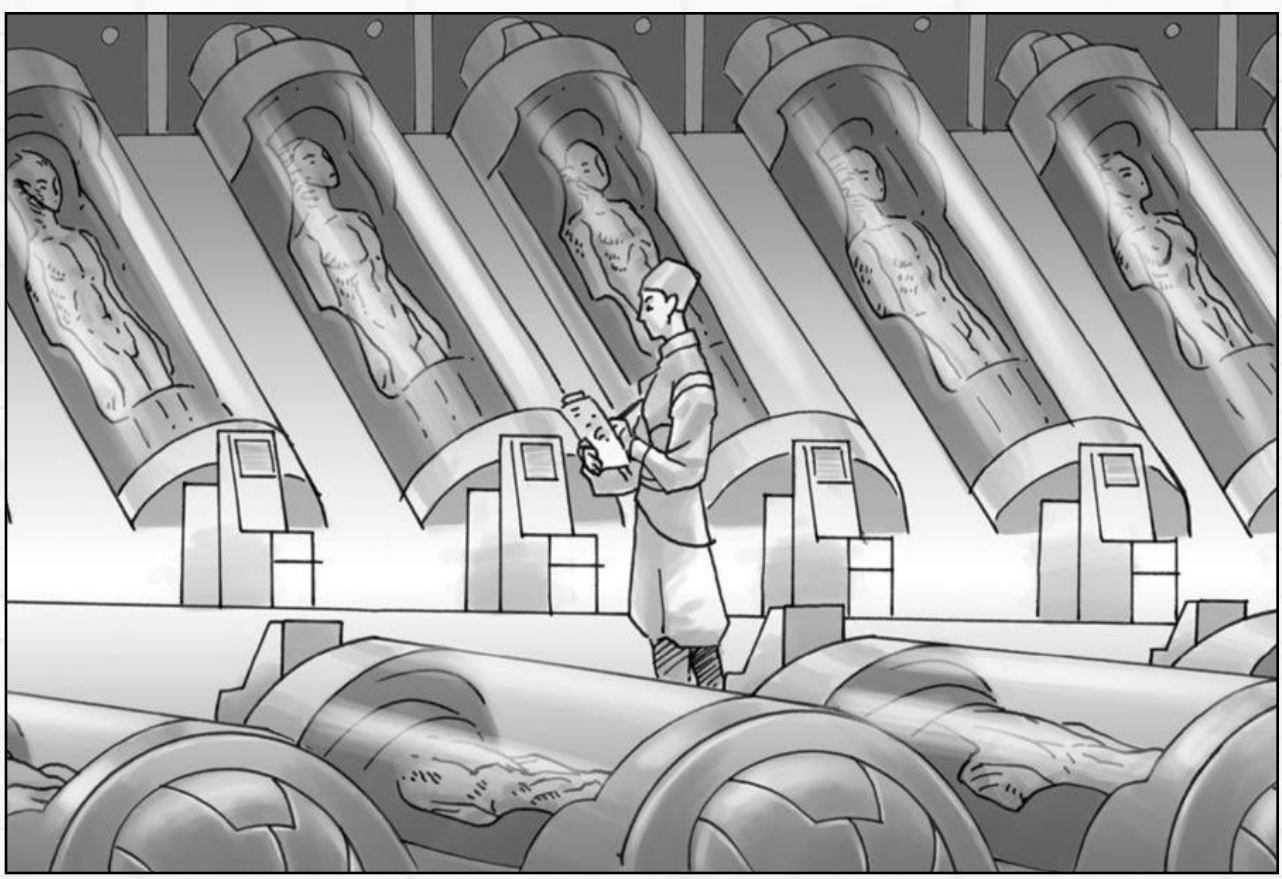
all humanity. By creating new races from base human stock, the Lawgivers combined demonstrations of their wondrous power with the eminently practical idea of making new types of people who could work and colonize parts of Creation that were otherwise difficult to access. Three Twilight Exalted, working together, took several thousand human volunteers and transformed them into the people of the air, the people of the sea and the people of the earth. While they were not the only Exalted working on the project (for many others offered helpful suggestions or ran simultaneous experiments), they were its main organizers. By order of the Deliberative, they had final authority regarding what changes were included and what were left out. The final results were named blessed mortals, for they had been shaped into something more than—or at least other than—human.

The blessed mortals were granted life spans twice as long as those of ordinary stock. They were also given psychological conditioning to make sure that they would serve the Solars faithfully. Even though they had been chosen from among the most faithful and willing of mortal volunteers, the Solars remembered the lesson that the gods taught the Primordials and saw no reason to repeat it. Psychological conditioning was also important to help the newly created races adjust to their new habitats. Merely being able to breathe underwater or to see and endure in a total absence of light does not necessarily make normal humans able to mentally endure such alien environments. The new races had to be trained to use their new capabilities until they were the norm, as well as being taught that they were blessed by the Lawgivers and must use their new capabilities in service to them. In many cases, that conditioning passed into the lore of the race and has been passed down (if in warped and partial form) to the current Age of Sorrows. The crafted races remember, even now, that they were made by the Exalted to serve them.

In the thousands of years that followed, other Celestial bioengineers created additional varieties of blessed mortals. Some, such as the minikins, were produced on a large scale to serve across Creation, while others, like the albino slaves that became the dune people, were made for a single task in a single location. As creations and favored servants of the Lawgivers, however, members of the crafted races were often given special treatment, granted preferential status and training and so on. This favoritism resulted in them being significantly represented in positions of power and authority across Creation—and also led to them being targeted during the Usurpation, since the Dragon-Blooded could not allow such faithful servants of the Solars to live.

The People of the Air

The people of the air were originally created to tame the frontiers of the Far North. They were built to survive in a cold climate and on limited resources. Besides wings and enhanced eyesight, their creators gave them unusually long lives, which contributed to their survival as a species and



Characters Among the Crafted Races

When creating heroic mortal characters from the crafted races, they are built according to the rules in Chapter Two of this book, though bonus points must be spent to obtain the mutations common to the species. It is also possible for a member of any crafted race to receive Celestial Exaltation. Exalted crafted humans are created as normal Exalts, but with bonus points having to be devoted to mutations as with creating heroic mortal characters.

their still-extant civilization. They witnessed the decline of the Solars and the Usurpation and were wise enough to flee and hide once the Dragon-Blooded rose to power. Unfortunately, no concealment could protect the air folk from the Great Contagion or the inrush of the Wyld. They now exist in isolated enclaves, for while humans accept them more readily than some of the other crafted races, the people of the air are still aware of how easily fortune could turn against them. The air folk have learned many things over the centuries: Primary among them is caution.

Origins

The air folk were designed by a team of Twilight Caste Exalted working together to engineer a species that would be beautiful as well as effective in the environment for which it was built. Led by the famous bioethnologist Soaring Miracle Hammer, they combined the wings and eyes of birds of prey with the coloration of swans and the life span of double-century owls. The result was as attractive as it was hardy, and while the newly crafted people of the air did indeed help colonize the North, they also spread across Creation, admired by both Exalts and humans. Their capital city was Sezakan, in the Northwestern mountains now lost to the Wyld. They also had major outposts at Gethamane (where they traded with the Dragon Kings and studied under them), Chiaroscuro (where they dwelled in some of the highest of the glass towers) and the city of Amrelles on the great Western continent. While they did have cities and towns in the more level and less-forested parts of the East, the air folk's wings were not well adapted to the great forests of the Far East. The people of the air were built with a larger wingspan than modern hawkmen, intended for flying over the great distances of the North rather than navigating the thick growth of the East. While shorter wings, better adapted to thick forest, have developed among the air folk over the centuries, they preferred the vast expanses and the high peaks to the narrow spaces of the trees in the days of their glory.

The beauty and popularity of the people of the air allowed them a latitude that other crafted races never enjoyed. Many Celestial Exalted treated them as favored servants, even as pets or lovers. Even the gods took pleasure in the air folk, resulting in a high number of God-Blooded children. While this caused discontent among many pure humans (which would lead to some of the later post-Usurpation pogroms), the people of the air were always able to retreat to their high-pinnacled cities, out of the reach of those below.

Development

The air folk were quick to take advantage of their ability to travel and endure harsh conditions, eagerly spreading through the North with a zeal that was only partly due to conditioning from their Exalted crafters. Led by Aisato Snow-Winged, one of the first to emerge from Soaring Miracle Hammer's Essence laboratories, they sought autonomy and conquest as well as new lands for their masters. While the air folk were designed to accept servitude as only natural, they wanted lands of their own to rule under the Exalted. They desired soaring mountains and pinnacles where they alone could travel, far from the humans whom they were already beginning to view as lesser creatures.

The Wyld took its toll on the early air folk colonists, just as it did on the pure humans on the borders of Creation. The pure white wings designed by the Twilight Caste engineers developed into a variety of different shapes and shades, resulting in the spectrum (from white through cream to gray) that can be seen in modern air folk. (Other poxes also afflicted the air folk colonists, but affected individuals were generally shunned and not permitted to breed. Their crafters had instilled in them high instincts toward racial purity and aesthetics.) While different wing colors were not regarded as outright ugly, white wings were soon considered the height of beauty, and city rulers almost always came from white-winged families.

While preserving the normal contemporary Creation standards of gender equality, childcare rapidly became a pressing issue. Air folk children are born winged and can fly practically as soon as they can crawl. Given the air folk tendency to have cities in high places, it became the norm to rear children in large shared nurseries, and for the care and education of children to be viewed as work for pregnant women. (Pregnant female air folk are less graceful and efficient than usual, which encourages them to stay out of the public view.)

Built for the Northern climate and supported by their crafters, the people of the air rapidly established themselves. Some of their cities were in areas that could be reached only by flying, while others were shared with normal humans, with the air folk inhabiting high trees, pinnacles or towers. In mixed-population cities, the groups often remained distinct, with the air folk viewing themselves as a glamorous, privileged elite.

While many air folk were warriors, merchants, couriers and hunters, the race also had its due number of artists, poets, savants and thaumaturges. Of course, it is hardly surprising that their art most often dealt with the air and winds, and that their thaumaturgy was often oriented toward weather-working and cajoling elementals of the air. The famous savant Tarasina Stormcaller was known for being able to whistle up high winds at a moment's notice and for her friends among lesser storm serpents.

Relationships with Humans

Humans and air folk are interfertile and are quite capable of finding each other attractive. Long-term relationships between humans and air folk are looked down on from the air folk side, however, unless the human is somehow specially gifted. In First Age days, such relationships were regarded with uncomfortable awe from the human side. A mixed couple is likely to find itself outcast from both societies.

The genetic traits for the air folk are generally dominant, resulting in nine out of 10 children being born winged. (If the mother is pure human, she will probably require medical assistance during the birth—air folk women were crafted to make such births easy.) Winged children will be accepted into air folk society without many problems, but there is simply no place for wingless children among the air folk. Under the best circumstances, they will be placed with a human family or orphanage, but they are more likely to be abandoned to die in some high place.

In the modern era, those air folk groups that allow human contact are more willing to permit open relationships with humans, as long as any children are born winged. The birth of a wingless child is social grounds for the end of a relationship. Even if the air folk partner wishes to continue it, intense social pressure will be brought on him to break it off.

It is possible for a person of the air to bind her wings in order to restrain them while in narrow or cluttered spaces, or to conceal them under robes or a cloak. (The person in question will require full clothing that covers the shoulders and back, and will look slightly stoop-shouldered. With a successful [Perception + Awareness] roll, viewers will realize that the shape of her shoulders and back is unnatural. It is impossible to conceal the wings and their bindings from close inspection.) While no air folk would have even considered binding their wings for disguise during the First Age, those who served in the retinues of Exalted sorcerers and engineers often did so while in their laboratories, to prevent accidents. In the current Age, however, young people of the air who have left their native settlements often bind their wings to prevent discovery of their true nature.

The Usurpation's Effects: A Fall from Greatness

Unfortunately for the air folk, their high cities and aeries made for ideal sanctuaries for the fleeing Solars and Lunars. Naturally, the air folk fought in defense of their masters, and they died just as readily and easily as humans. Their capital Sezakan was strewn with winged corpses. Those few air folk settlements that had not been touched by the initial battles of the Usurpation closed their borders and isolated themselves, hoping to ride out the storm and emerge untouched on the other side. Once the fighting had died down, some of these cities sent prompt messages of allegiance to the Shogunate, while others declared their independence.

When the Shogunate began its great purge of creatures and races crafted by the Celestial Exalted, the air folk—many of whom had been involved in the battles of the Usurpation—were again caught up in the events and were as quickly sentenced to death as the other crafted folk. Many of them fled, seeking refuge in pure air folk cities on the borders of the Wyld, while others bound their wings and concealed themselves among normal humans, hiding in isolated villages. In the turmoil of the period, many small towns and villages were grateful for visiting thaumaturges or healers, and were prepared to avoid questions in return for concrete assistance.

The virulence of the Great Contagion was the same regardless of species, so the high air folk cities were afflicted as quickly as the human cities far below, despite their attempts to sequester themselves. A further blow was struck when the Fair Folk invaded and the Wyld swallowed the edges of Creation. The people of the air had been proud of their role as colonists, building cities and pinnacles near the Wyld's borders. Now, the few survivors were forced to flee inward, while those who chose to remain were lost to the forces of chaos.

Beaten, driven from their borderland cities, thinned by disease and persecution, there were barely enough people of the air left to maintain a stable population for their race. They didn't have the option of retreating into the depths of the ocean, like the people of the sea—while they could reach the mountain heights, they still required food and other resources. Their great wings made them very obvious targets for persecution or slavery, and while Realm policy and Immaculate dogma did not automatically proscribe them as rebels or heretics, neither did the Realm consider them allies. Some air folk wanted to ally themselves with the Realm or with Lookshy, to serve as mercenaries or couriers, but the air folk leaders feared becoming a minor dependent client tribe, living at the sufferance of the Dragon-Blooded. They wanted independence, and ultimately, they wanted power. The remaining groups of air folk formed scattered enclaves, mostly in the North and East, with the remnants of First Age lore and technology that they had managed to scavenge from their lost cities.

Current Situation

The air folk tendency toward pride and isolationism has developed into a fear of the rest of Creation. Many air folk enclaves warn their children that, if they are discovered, they will be slaughtered, enslaved or driven into the Wyld to the mercies of the raksha. While these fears are not without foundation, they are exaggerated. Just as the Metagalapan hawkriders are highly useful auxiliaries to Lookshy, the air folk could just as easily win respect and military or political power. They hold fragments of First Age lore and technology that would intrigue scavenger lords and savants. And they

Methelan, the Circling City

Methelan was a wonder of First Age architecture, a vast ring of metal and jade that spun around a central pinnacle, balanced by an Essence network strung throughout the surrounding Northern peaks. It was accessible only by air and was almost totally populated by air folk, though both Terrestrial and Celestial Exalted frequently visited. The whole city was a gigantic refining plant, and its motion and Essence flows served to draw up molten gold through the central spine and distil it into orichalcum in the factory-cathedral at the top. The air folk inhabitants were fortunate that no Solar attempted to take refuge there during the Usurpation. They were quick to declare their loyalty to the new rulers, currying favor by continuing to manufacture orichalcum for them. When the Fair Folk invaded, however, Methelan was lost to the Wyld.

An air folk woman who recently arrived in Whitewall claims to have escaped from a Fair Folk court that has taken possession of Methelan. She says that it is ruled by a crooked raksha noble who styles himself the Cripple in Gold. Several forces, including those of the Bull of the North and those of the Lover Clad in the Raiment of Tears, are reported to be investigating this claim further.

Air Folk and Hawkmen

Some people assume that, since they both have wings, air folk and hawkmen must be distant relatives. Nothing could be further from the truth. The hawkmen of Halta and Metagalapa are the distant offspring of Lunar breeding or Wyld mutations. They have the heads of hawks as well as the wings and constitute an obvious blend of bird and man. Air folk result from Celestial Exalt biosculpting, and have human heads and bodies, with their wings being the only obvious avian part of their form.

Both groups tend to look down on each other, with the air folk viewing the hawkmen as half-animal crossbreeds, and the hawkmen viewing the air folk as dangerous and antiquated toys of the ancient Anathema. While there have been a few cases of individuals coming to respect each other for their prowess in the air, referring to one of the air folk as a hawkman (or vice versa) is generally considered an insult.

can fly. While this ability was less vital in the First Age, in the days of automata and flying craft and common sorcery, it now gives them a potentially vital edge in the wars that are troubling Creation. But if the air folk fail to take advantage of the possibilities open to them, they will be drawn in on one side or another eventually but will lack bargaining power.

Air folk enclaves have become tribal societies, often descending toward barbarism. A council of elders holds the ultimate authority, but given how widely a group of air folk can stray from their home bases, hunt leaders are expected to exercise authority in the field. The sexes are equal, but women always tend the children. Keeping normal humans as slaves is common and convenient, since the humans cannot escape from the high dwellings that the air folk favor, and they can sire or bear air folk children to increase the enclave's size. Such slaves are used for gathering (never hunting), craftwork and menial tasks. While some air folk groups take slaves in raids on human villages or by capturing travelers, this is a rare practice, as it exposes the air folk to possible notice. They do not sell slaves to the Fair Folk, as the people of the air *hate* the Wyld and everything associated with it. One of the few occasions when they might actually assist normal humans would be to fight off a raksha raid or a Wyld mutant group.

Air folk enclaves are often situated in mountain valleys, among the trees in lonely groves or in the tattered remains of ancient towered ruins. They have fallen from the days of First Age architecture, and now their habitations are slipshod and makeshift, with hangings woven from silk and bamboo that cover up the cracks in the walls. Children are trained in flight but warned not to let themselves be seen. The air folk go out in disguise to meet travelling merchants, binding their wings to hide their nature.

Fewer than 25,000 people of the air survive in Creation today. Their largest settlement is in the city of Sezakan, hidden among the mountains on the western coast of the northernmost lands. High cliffs and mountains make the city's valley almost inaccessible, except from the air. At the center is a large manse that looks like a pyramid of glowing blue ice, which provides the city with light and protection from the frigid air, and which powers the reality engine that partly protects the city from the Wyld. Some of the air folk there trade with Gethamane and the Haslanti, offering unmelting ice and feathersteel in return for supplies of food and other essentials. The city is ruled by the Solar Council, which consists of elected leaders advised by shamans who deal with the local gods and elementals. The inhabitants worship the Unconquered Sun, and since the city was never conquered by the Shogunate, they have one of Creation's few intact temples to that god. The city's population includes a few God-Blooded, from liaisons with local deities and elementals, and Dragon-Blooded descended from Deliberative loyalists who took shelter there during the Usurpation.

Sadly for the air folk, much of Sezakan's First Age technology and relics have now fallen into disuse, and only a few working pieces survive. The city itself is mentioned in a few historical records, but its position in the fringes of the Wyld makes it nearly impossible to find. Visitors who do manage to reach it are expected to keep the city's location and existence secret. Anyone who seems unlikely to do so is held captive or killed.

Less civilized air folk enclaves lie across the North and the Northeast. Some of them still honor the Unconquered Sun, Luna and the Maidens, as do the people of Sezakan. Others have chosen to honor local deities instead, ranging from greater gods such as Caltia or Grala of the Endless Hunt to minor gods that are also worshiped by local barbarian tribes.

Among the better known air folk enclaves (that is, known to other air folk) are Atlastiva, on the northern border of the White Sea, southeast of Diamond Hearth; Tiencol, far north of Chaya; and unusually far south, Silebe, in the Summer Mountains southwest of Kirighast.

Atlastiva is lashed by the Northern winds and has to fight off frequent assaults from local Fair Folk while avoiding the notice of Haslanti air boats. These air folk fish the waters of the White Sea like ospreys but also use harpoons and spears to hunt dolphins, seals and walruses. Very few in this enclave survive to become elders, so it is extremely warlike. The hunt leader, Athen Snowfury, is the first in every charge and the last in every retreat.

Tiencol is mostly guarded by the reputation and nature of Chaya, as the Chayans themselves do not tend to explore to their north. It is actually one of the most stable air folk enclaves, and though it has few slaves, the air folk there live relatively undisturbed. In fact, they might actually be able to assimilate back into human society reasonably well. A few young air folk leave the enclave every year to travel in disguise, and while some never return, others have brought back tales of the Solar and Abyssal Exalted, the disappearance of the Scarlet Empress and other big events.

Silebe is an anomaly, existing far to the south of most air folk enclaves. Its inhabitants dwell at the top of the Summer Mountain peaks, taking advantage of the colder air there. While some local tribes know of them, they also fear these air folk as lesser air spirits, offering their own children to them as slaves. The air folk take care to sacrifice heavily to the local gods in order to ward off any suspicions of stealing divine honors, but they keep the slaves. A mated pair, Muon Swift-Courser and Alarotha Hound-of-the-Air leads this enclave. They know of several local jade deposits and are looking for a way to exploit them.

Nearly a thousand air folk live in the civilized nations of the Threshold—mostly as slaves, kept for their exotic looks, as pets or lovers or showpieces. A few find a place as couriers or messengers, but they know that they live on a knife's edge, liable to be labeled a mutant or a creation of the Anathema at the first sign of trouble in the vicinity. In Chiaroscuro, the air folk woman Gull-in-Glass who works as a free courier is attempting to negotiate with the Grey Shields mercenary company to get herself and others hired as an auxiliary brigade. She intends to smuggle other air folk slaves to freedom and get them employment with the Grey Shields and possibly even affiliate them with one of the hidden enclaves. The full scope of the potential enterprise is still undetermined, but she hopes the mercenaries can see the value in fliers. If the Grey Shields fail her, she will attempt to seek patronage elsewhere.

People of the Air

Created as proud masters of the air and explorers of the North, the people of the air built a network of cities across the untouched Northern steppes and mountains, and were admired for their intelligence and strength as much as for their grace and speed. Now their proudest cities are fallen, their few remaining enclaves hidden, and thousands of them live in slavery across Creation. Where they once prided themselves on helping hold the border against the Wyld, they must now conceal themselves on the very Bordermarches. While they would once have walked in Creation among the human throngs and been admired for the splendor of their white wings, they must now hide those wings if they are to move freely. Otherwise, they risk being slain as Wyld mutants or captured as slaves.

But they endure. They preserve ancient pieces of First Age technology and lost artifacts from their high cities, they train their young in combat as well as hunting, and they remember the Lawgivers who were once their masters, dreaming that they will come again and return the air folk to their rightful place.

Clothing and Weapons: The most important thing about air folk clothing is that it should not hinder flying. Therefore, people of the air wear an assortment of items such as tunics, loincloths, belts and scarves—anything that will not get in the way of their wings. Air folk wear cloaks or robes only if they are ill, and they never conceal their wings unless they are deliberately disguising themselves. While they carry swords or long knives for use at close quarters, they favor javelins or tridents for use at a distance. Bows are not popular, as it is difficult to fire them while in midair.

Mutations: All people of the air possess the Enhanced Sight and Longevity poxes, and the Wings abomination.

Associations: the color white, winds, birds, the Northern direction

Sobriquets: Air Folk, Birdmen, Blessed of the Air, Flyers, Winged Ones

Concepts: innocent explorer, proud warrior, seeker of ancient cities, spy with hidden wings

I didn't carry you up here just to let you feel the exhilaration of flight or see the wonders of our hidden home. I did it to make sure you could never reveal our secret existence. I'm sorry. Farewell.

The People of the Dunes

The dune people were crafted as slaves, and they now ferociously treasure their freedom, looking on the rest of Creation's peoples as enemies who must be slaughtered whenever possible—and as food. The dune people are albinos who must avoid the rays of the sun (particularly in the Far South), as it sears them without mercy. Their children are trained to hunt and kill humans, beastmen and Wyld mutants as soon as they can walk. While they worship Luna and respect her Chosen, they abhor and distrust the Solar Exalted, considering them betrayers, slavers and fiends. They'd make excellent allies for the Realm… if it wasn't for their habits of distrust and cannibalism.

Origins

Late in the Old Realm, the Lawgiver Eternal Crimson Sunset founded the Pleasure Dome of Xela-Cas, a city devoted entirely to pleasure and recreation. She also crafted a slave race to serve its visitors' every need, making them albinos so that they would remain discreetly underground and avoid the city's sunlit streets. This race was designed to stay out of the way of visitors and come out only at night to perform menial tasks such as cleaning and preparing food for the next day. Similarly, she taught her slaves that their place was servitude and gratitude, and that only a Solar as merciful as her would give them a safe place to live and allow them to serve the Chosen of Heaven.

In the mythology of the dune people, she is remembered as the Great Liar.

When the Usurpation came, a few Solars were loitering in Xela-Cas rather than attending the great feast. The Dragon-Blooded who had been sent to assassinate them also intended to kill the albino slaves, as a simple matter of cleaning house. Yet, a pair of Lunar Exalts there took pity on the dune people. These two Lunars, Ka-Koshu and Namiha Featherback, had sympathized with the slaves' plight before but had no way to ameliorate things. Now they could see that the Solar cause was lost, that they themselves needed to flee the area and that stripping Xela-Cas of its slaves would seriously hamper pursuit. They led the albinos into the desert in the dead of night while Xela-Cas burned and the Solars died.

Development

In the deep desert wastes, the two Lunars taught the slaves the arts of survival, using a combination of Charms, practicality and the fact that those slaves who didn't learn rapidly died. (Ka-Koshu and Namiha later became two of the founders of the Thousand Streams River, using much of what they learned from their experiences teaching the slaves.) They renamed the albinos the "dune people" and commanded them never to live in slavery again, before finally moving on to escape Dragon-Blooded pursuit.

Over time, the dune people grew increasingly savage, rejecting the remains of the civilization that had created them. Based on the Lunars' teachings, they evolved tribal structures similar to the other desert barbarian tribes, with a high respect for personal honor, the tribal ancestors and the spirits around them. Their highest priority, however, was survival. Every day was spent in desperate concealment from the lethal rays of the sun, and every night was taken up in the hunt for food and water. Aesthetics were literally pared down to the bone (though their carvings on human bone were marvels of limited scope), and their literary tradition became severely practical. Stories became concerned purely with the details of hunting and survival and the folly of dishonor and betrayal, rather than anything more imaginative.

The first of the truly great dune people leaders was Dorol Bone-Breather. Previously, the dune people had taken shelter from the sun by sleeping beneath the sand during the day, using carved wooden tubes to breathe through. Dorol introduced the concept of using the carved thighbones of their enemies. In one stroke, this both dealt with the problem of limited wood supplies and presented a convenient mark of adulthood. Dorol became overleader of a dozen dune people tribes and eradicated several neighboring desert tribes to establish a clear territory for the dune people.

Unfortunately, Dorol's vigorous conquests and the increased number of dune people, together with the total absence of trade, led to the dune people moving toward starvation, having exhausted the area's resources. It was then that the next great dune people leader, Erion Clear-Vision, led his tribes to the obvious solution: eat human flesh. This was at first greeted with horror and dismay, with the dune people still considering humans as distant relatives. Yet, Erion was a skilled orator. He claimed that their Lunar saviors had ordered them to survive at any cost, he pointed to the little children of the tribe who were starving, and he reminded the dune people how they had been slaves before to normal humans. His appeals to the dune people's pride and hunger won out. At first, the consumption of human meat was limited to the very young and very old, to keep them from starving when the tribe's adults could make do with less food. Gradually, it became a staple of the dune people's diet. This change in diet coincided with a greater degree of separation from normal humanity. The dune people came to view themselves as a different race, and they began to nurture an active malice and bitterness against humanity, which had first enslaved them then driven them into the desert to die.

The Great Contagion struck the dune people just as it did the rest of Creation, but their population had grown enough by then that they were able to survive it. While they didn't go so far as to eat infected humans, they did unite to wipe out diminished human tribes and oases, looting their stocks of food and weapons. (While the dune people had become universally anthropophagous, they still ate other things as well.)

The Fair Folk invasion that followed, however, drove the dune people back inward toward civilization, and they found themselves between hammer and anvil, crushed between the humans (who often viewed them as Wyld mutants or raksha

auxiliaries) and the Fair Folk. On several occasions, they even went so far as to propose an alliance of convenience with the humans, but they were universally rejected. Such rejections solidified dune people opinion of the human race.

With the accession of the Scarlet Empress and the reestablishment of Creation's borders, the dune people began to spread out again, preying on trade caravans and isolated tribes. While no great leaders on the level of Dorol or Erion have emerged in the last few hundred years, the dune people population has risen to the point that a leader on that level could pose a serious threat to trade across the South of Creation.

Current Situation

The dune people's emphasis on survival at all costs has meant that their race has grown strong and increased in numbers, despite the South's harsh conditions. Between 150,000 and 200,000 dune people exist across the South, in tribes of 50-300 people. Each tribe travels along particular songlines across the deserts: routes recorded in tribal chants and also tattooed on manskin tapestries that are kept by the tribal leaders. When a particular tribe grows too large for its current area to support it, it splits in two parts, with the smaller part choosing a new songline to travel. Shamans perform ritual human or animal sacrifices to Luna at significant points where different songlines cross.

Dune people shamans typically have the traits of thaumaturges (see **Exalted**, pp. 280–281), with dots in Medicine, Lore, Survival and Performance. They rarely have friendly spirit mentors or allies, and they never have familiars. Even if the harsh desert possessed the sort of animal that could be swayed to such a task, the dune person would eat it rather than befriend it. Common shamanic skills include training in Elemental Summoning, Spirit Beckoning, Warding and Weather Working. (Dune people do not sacrifice to their ancestors. The desert has little enough for the living, and nothing to spare for the dead. Dune people ghosts usually pass directly into Lethe.) Demon summoning would greatly interest dune people shamans, but they have never had the chance to learn the skill thus far.

The dune people have their own language, a degenerate whispered form of Old Realm that sounds like snakes slithering across the sand. Their written pictograms also descend from Old Realm writing, and a savant familiar with Old Realm could decipher dune people reading and writing if necessary (at a -2 internal Lore penalty). Of course, actually getting to talk with one of the dune people is an unlikely thing in itself, but they will respect ambassadors who come in the name of Luna or one of the desert gods they honor. They scarcely ever agree to any treaties or truces, but they might agree to a mutual withdrawal from a particular area if the other side has proven itself to be strong enough.

Dune people value ferocity as well as strength. To say that you fear a dune person is to compliment her. (The dune people dialect contains a number of words that stress awe at another person's personal strength or viciousness without implying one's own weakness. It is very important to be able to say that you fear another person's ferocity without actually suggesting that you are *afraid*.) The dune people have no marriage rituals or property laws but simply sleep together in the sand all day, sharing everything except their weapons and breathing tubes in common. Personal honor is vitally important, but actual dueling (usually on the grounds of compassion to outsiders or betraying the tribe through laziness) is rare. It is carried out using sleeping bones as weapons, until death or a sleeping bone is broken, and if a sleeping bone is broken, the owner must leave the tribe. Given that the sleeping bones are fragile things, it is very easy for both parties to end up exiled, which makes most dune people reluctant to engage in a full duel.

Cross-Species Romance

The odds are against cross-species breeding between humans and dune people. Humans view the dune people as crazed murderous cannibals, while dune people view humans as slavers, weaklings and food. Also, the dune people are unattractive by Southern standards and similarly view humans as aesthetically unpleasant. It would take a truly astonishing set of events for any sort of friendship to evolve, much less romance. While rape is possible, the dune people would rather eat human flesh than ravage it.

It is possible, however, for a cross-species child to be conceived. Such a child would not be an albino, but merely a pale human. (In the First Age, the albino servants of Xela-Cas were often taken as concubines, and they were designed to have children outside their species.) Such a child would be rejected by the dune people and left out at birth to die of exposure.

Infant mortality among the albinos is high. Daylight births rarely survive, and children must quickly master the ways of the desert as they grow. While young, they sleep in clutches in manskin tents underground, but when one is old enough to learn how to use it, he is given the sleeping bone of a previous member of the tribe (kept by the shaman for the tribe's children). The young learn the tribal chants and history, how to butcher humans for their meat and use their ligaments and bones for weapons before rendering down the remains for water, how to tattoo themselves with the juices of desert plants, and how to hunt and kill. When they are old enough (usually 17 or 18 years of age) they hunt down a human and hollow out sleeping bones of their own. Several camps gather to welcome the new adult, while shamans pierce themselves with bone slivers to enter ecstatic trances and call the spirits of the sandstorm to bless the gathering.

The dune people know the regular trade routes, just as any hunter knows the paths of his prey. They rarely take

an entire caravan and can sometimes be bought off by a caravan master leaving victims behind for them. Some slave caravans use this as a threatened punishment to keep their slaves in line, crippling a couple of slaves as an example and leaving them behind for the dune people. The most reliable way to avoid the dune people, however, is for caravans to skirt the edges of the Wyld on their routes or to deliberately journey through Wyld-infested areas, as the dune people loathe and avoid the Wyld.

And yet, it is a mistake to simply decry the dune people as moronic cannibals, as so many often do. The people of the dunes have all the virtues of the desert barbarian tribes, as well as many of their vices. They value personal honor, the safety of their tribe, the protection of children, respect for elders and due worship of the gods. They have personal aesthetics, expressed in the carving of their breathing tubes and the tattoos on their skin. When there is famine, the old and the young are fed first. When there are sandstorms, mothers would give their lives to save their children. When humans come hunting them down, they fight to the death with heart-stopping courage against vastly superior odds to protect their fellows.

The dune people attitude toward humans comes down to two simple points: the legends that every child of their people learn, telling how the humans enslaved them, and the fact that they have absolutely no contact with humans except over the edge of a weapon. Dune people don't view *themselves* as cannibals. They certainly would never eat each other. They eat human flesh because humans are a different species, and an enemy species at that. The dune people simply have no history of peaceful interaction with humans and no way of beginning such interactions.

Sometimes in human strikes against dune people tribes, the dune people adults have all been wiped out but a few very young children have survived. (Older children would have fought and died with the adults.) Slave traders sell

Dune People and the Wyld

The dune people don't tolerate the Wyld. They avoid Wyld-tainted areas, they kill Wyld mutants but refrain from eating their meat, and they hunt down and slaughter any of their own kind who develop Wyld mutations. While civilized humans in the South often assume that the dune people are Wyld mutants, better-informed desert tribesmen know that this is one of the worst insults that can be offered to one of the dune people.

The people of the dunes are a very tightly knit race, with very obvious physical traits and closely woven tribal structure. Everyone outside their group is an enemy. Everyone perverted from their group is an enemy. Everyone different from their group is an enemy. They aren't interested in physical or mental changes, and view such things as perversion and insanity. They don't have a concept for "good change" as opposed to "bad change." Their greatest leaders are the ones who managed to introduce some form of improvement to the tribe without being killed for new and dangerous behavior. The Wyld is viewed as an abomination, and only dangers come from it.

such children as curiosities who can be trained as guards or laborers. Since these children will barely have been old enough to learn the dune people language, let alone Flametongue or any other common Southern language, they are unable to communicate and are assumed to be unintelligent, barely a step up from monkeys. Such slaves are valued for their night vision and stealth but are harshly treated and regarded as animals.

One situation under which dune people might deliberately interact with humans (in a relatively non-hostile manner) would be under divine orders. The shamans of the dune people tribes devoutly honor Luna and the desert spirits and would reluctantly consider meeting and negotiating with humans if the spirits command it. They also remember the Chosen of Luna from the ancient tales and would respect anyone who could claim that distinction.

Major Dune People Tribes

The dune people don't have fixed settlements. Such settlements represent human weakness, and the dune people avoid such things. They also don't need to worry about positioning themselves on trade routes, except when it comes to ambushing caravans. Several of the currently notable dune people tribes are the Oldest Bone tribe, the White Sandstorm tribe, the Moontrack tribe and the Iron Saber tribe.

The Oldest Bone tribe can trace the lineage of its shamans back to the two Lunars who taught the dune people the ways of the desert. While otherwise mostly normal, the shamans of the tribe are a spiritual authority for the dune people as a whole. Other dune people tribes bring them particularly knotty problems of honor or spirit propitiation. The current oldest shamans are brother-sister twins (an unusual event and an omen in itself), Kedo Whitesand and Marilke Blacksand. While they have their race's usual prejudices against humans, they also preserve the lore that the Chosen of Luna freed them and that their race therefore owes Luna and her Chosen some sort of repayment. This tribe is also notorious for having young explorers leave temporarily for far-ranging solo hunts or exploration.

The White Sandstorm tribe honors the wind spirits that bring the killing desert sandstorms and siroccos. Heretically, these dune people even give these spirits greater respect than they do Luna herself. Some of their tribe are God-Blooded, causing the tribe to be feared by other dune people, who suspect them of harboring Wyld mutants. The current leader of the tribe is God-Blooded, a woman named Astmilla Sandcutter. She encourages overly purist younger members of her tribe to go out on long journeys of exploration and hunting. The wind spirits that guide them want more devoted worshipers and are looking for ways to strengthen the tribe and increase its numbers.

The dune people of the Moontrack tribe are implacable hunters, and it is said that they can follow the moon herself as she journeys across the desert. While some dune people are prepared to let the remnants of a caravan escape once they have taken sufficient captives and corpses, the Moontrack tribe pursue it to the last man, taking every last corpse to be rendered down and leaving nothing but scattered trade items behind in the desert. As well as being excellent hunters, they are very well fed by dune people standards. They have less actual animosity toward humans than some of the other tribes do, but they view it as a matter of personal pride and good hunting practice to salvage every last enemy and strip them to the bone.

The Iron Saber tribe is notable because its leader, Krado Ironhand, has begun to introduce the concept of personal property among his tribe. It began with him taking an iron blade for himself and keeping it after slaughtering a caravan of slavers, but he then went on to encourage other members of the tribe to choose and keep their own weapons of metal, contrary to the tradition of communal property. This practice has resulted in more food and more victories over local human forces, but the tribe's shamans are muttering that this is against tradition and that Krado will bring disaster on them all. He has already renamed the tribe (it was previously known as the East Hawk tribe) and is hoping to persuade other tribes to join him so that they can increase their scope. He has yet to realize that raiding on such a scale and with such a degree of success brings a higher degree of likely counterattacks from civilized settlements.

Dune People and the Unconquered Sun

When they were slaves in the First Age, the dune people worshiped all the gods, as was proper: the Unconquered Sun, Luna, the Maidens and various lesser gods that were the patrons of hard-working servants and concubines. While the Lunars who led the dune people out into freedom didn't deny the Unconquered Sun's power and divinity, neither did they stress his worship. Faced with the agonizing death the sun's rays brought them, the dune people saw the Unconquered Sun as a nightmare deity of punishment rather than a kind father or a just ruler. They no longer worship him. Instead, they pray to Luna to be spared from his wrath and thank the merciful sandstorm spirits who blot out his rays.

People of the Dunes

The people of the dunes clawed their way out of slavery to survive in the desert. They live in tribes where all property is held in common, with no laws, but only the words of the shamans and their own oral history to guide them in living honorably. They view humans as an entirely different species, hunting people down to eat their flesh and turn their bones into breathing tubes and weapons. While they respect other dune people, the people of the rest of Creation are their enemies.

In the endless wastes of the Southern deserts, they have been battered by Fair Folk raiders, harassed by city-dwellers, hunted down by desert barbarians and massacred by mercenary armies. They live in a world where water is scarce and where a touch of the omnipresent sun during the day could kill them. Yet they survive, they tend their children lovingly, they worship the gods, and they remember the legends of the two Lunars who led them out of captivity.

Survival in the desert leaves little room for dreams and hope, but if the dune people wish to ever be more than they are now, they must look more widely and dream of a new future, for themselves and for the South.

Clothing and Weapons: Dune people wear a bare minimum of clothing (often merely loincloths) made of salvaged fabric or human skin. They often scrub themselves in sand baths to remove the risk of their scent alerting their prey. The people of the dunes wield knives, axes, spiked clubs, boomerangs and short spears made from carved bone and obsidian.

Mutations: As albinos, all dune people possess the six-point version of the Sun-Seared Flaw. Their skin and hair is completely white, and prolonged exposure to sunlight has a deleterious effect on them. They suffer one level of bashing damage per minute of exposure to sunlight and must endure a three-die penalty during their exposure. Heavy clothing doubles the interval for environmental damage.

Associations: the color white, cannibals, bones, the moon, the Southern direction

Sobriquets: Dune People, Desert Cannibals, Flesh Eaters, Night Stalkers

Concepts: lost child brought up as a slave to humans, negotiator seeking alliance against the Wyld, shaman on mission from the spirits, wandering hunter

What's that? You have a family? I do too. And they're hungry.

The People of the Earth

Like the air and sea folk, the people of the earth were created by the Solar Exalted, crafted to be underground miners who would not only work far below the surface of Creation, but also be truly happy there. The earth folk were not supposed to be a slave race (examples of that kind came later, with the tree folk and others), but a celebration of what humans and Exalted could achieve in working together and the vanguard of a glorious new frontier-breaking exploration of Creation.

Beaten down by the Usurpation, earthquakes, the Great Contagion and the Fair Folk invasion, barely a thousand of the earth folk survived. Since the Scarlet Empress took power, they have increased in number, living among the Mountain Folk in their deep cities and identifying more with them than with the surface-dwelling humans. If they are to return to the surface and meet their kin among the humans and the crafted races again, they will come as strangers. They have learned much in their long exile, however, and it might be that they hold secrets that will be of value to all Creation.

Origins

As with the air and sea folk, the earth folk were made from human volunteers by the Twilight Caste Exalted. They were given short claws on their hands and feet that allowed them to both defend themselves and climb with consummate ability. Their large, featureless black eyes could see normally even in the total absence of light. Their skin was made bright azure, toughened to withstand injury and as smooth and hairless as the hide of a dolphin. (Original designs made them albinos, like other cave creatures, but it was felt that this would make them less efficient if they needed to come out into the open air. In the end, they were given azure skin as a personal dedication by one of the Copper Spiders to the Maiden of Serenity.)

The earth folk were designed to have a strong racial identity and to actually prefer being underground to being aboveground. They were intended to work in mines that might be miles deep, staying below ground for months on end and developing worked-out mines into living structures and transport networks behind them as they progressed onward, until eventually the whole of Creation might be connected underground just as it was aboveground. They were also thoroughly indoctrinated in loyalty to the Lawgivers, so that they could be trusted at times and in places where they might not be checked on for years.

Development

While the air folk and the sea folk made dramatic strides in exploration and trade, the earth folk simply went below ground and started digging. They produced great mines and

tunnels, they built underground cities (often using the remains of previous mines as starting points), and they did it all while hardly ever coming to the surface. Mine entries and ore transit points leading to the surface were manned by normal humans as well as by people of the earth, and that was the main area of interaction between the two. Emissaries from the earth folk did occasionally come to the surface for important religious festivals, to attend major events or when summoned by the Lawgivers or other Exalted. They also sent up representatives for trade. While the depths of the earth provided much that the people of the earth needed, they didn't provide everything.

Earth folk culture rapidly developed underground into something that could endure the stresses of earthquakes and mine collapses, arguments over ore discoveries and communal living in an enclosed environment. While brilliant miners were respected, expert organizers rapidly rose in the chain of command, and a bureaucracy developed. Goods had to be transported in and out of the mines, records had to be kept of new discoveries and worked-out shafts, and strategic planning was necessary on all levels of mine management.

This didn't become *pointless* bureaucracy, however. The moral system that developed among the earth folk was one of strict indebtedness and repayment. This system was summarized as the Three Great Debts, which were inscribed above the entrance to every earth folk mine.

The Three Debts

The first debt is the Debt of Gift:
For all gifts there must be repayment.
The second debt is the Debt of Creation:
The Lawgivers made us, and we owe them the repayment of service.
The third debt is the Debt of Law:
The law gives us peace, and we owe it the repayment of obedience.

First Age earth folk society was organized along these lines. Civil authority was a meritocracy, with the most efficient organizers rising to the top and using Old Realm information storage and filing techniques to coordinate underground expansion and track contracts and debts. Engineers and architects planned new mines and cities, while miners and gem-cutters worked the actual stone, and traders brought in food and other goods from the surface. While the earth folk had been designed so that they could survive off cave moss and water, they enjoyed the taste of surface cuisine. Normal human cooks were often lured down for a visit into the depths in order to prepare some of their best meals for the people of the earth. (Since the earth folk paid well, very few chefs refused.)

All formal contracts were recorded and registered with the local Authority—the earth folk term for the ranking bureaucrat for the area, and also for his subordinates. Marriage and adoption were also formal contracted affairs, though they were frequently accompanied by a blessing from the nearest priest. The people of the earth worshiped all the usual gods, but they paid particular honor to Primordials Gaia and Autochthon. Parents raised children to their early teens, then apprenticed them to a trade. At that point, each was formally adopted by her new master and expected to regard him as a parent. Since they might pass through several masters in their career, earth folk often ended up with multiple "parents," real and adoptive, all of whom they were supposed to honor and respect. This practice resulted in a heavily interwoven society, where change was almost impossible.

The earth folk produced numerous savants and thaumaturges, almost all of whom were gifted alchemists. Some of the most skilled were honored by being selected to work in the private laboratories of the Lawgivers. Their frequent communications to their parents allowed the earth folk to remain aware of what was going on in the world above and what the Exalted were doing. The Solars themselves paid little attention to what the people of the earth did as long as the supplies of ore and gemstones kept coming, and the earth folk themselves were suitably obedient. While a few Celestial Exalted were curious enough to explore the earth folk cities or build manses of their own in the depths of the earth, most of them preferred the sunlit parts of Creation.

The earth folk also had well-equipped armed forces. While the Darkbrood were the greatest threat in the caves and tunnels beneath Creation, there were also wild animals, demons that had escaped Malfeas, human criminals and (toward the edges of Creation) Wyld mutants. Earth folk battle tactics involved coordinated groups of small units armed with mundane arms, using their natural advantages in the underground, augmented with alchemical explosives and Essence-powered weapons when necessary.

Hunters were not a vital part of earth folk life. The people of the earth farmed varieties of cave moss and fungus and domesticated various cave lizards and fish. When expanding their territory, as opposed to simply mining, the architects and designers always included lakes to breed fish stock and fungus beds where they could force-culture some of the nutritious mushrooms that their Twilight designers had crafted. Issues of territory were negotiated by the local Authority. Earth folk society was placid, well fed, efficient and dull.

As the domain of the earth folk expanded, the people of the earth sometimes encountered the Mountain Folk. While the two groups were able to coexist and even cooperate to a limited degree, they did not fully trust one another. Yet, there was plenty of territory to work and explore. The Jadeborn and the earth folk had no need to associate closely, and when they did interact, the earth folk scrupulously observed their traditions of law and debt.

The Usurpation's Effects

When the Usurpation occurred, the Dragon-Blooded (and the Sidereal Exalted) were well aware of the earth folk's network of mines and tunnels underlying large portions of Creation.

Slipping Through the Net

Not all earth folk were willing to abide by their society's strictures or to harness themselves in never-ending debt and work in a socially acceptable niche. There were earth folk who were thieves, murderers, heretics who rejected the concept of the Three Debts, solo hunters and lone warriors, demon cultists, explorers following their instincts rather than their orders and even earth folk who were lazy.

Earth folk who were antisocial but not actually criminals were ostracized by society (depending on their success in their field of work) but often supported younger earth folk who were similarly fighting the social order. The elder outsiders adopted the younger as apprentices or provided loans to help them establish themselves in their particular field. Some cities, such as Greenweight (under Linowan) and Masonhigh (to the east of Whitewall) were known to have a high number of the "differently opinionated," and attracted pilgrimages of such groups from across Creation. While these cities were famous for great inspirational leaps and discoveries, they often lacked the rigorous safety standards and reliability of some of the other earth folk cities.

Earth folk who engaged in criminal actions (theft, assault, heresy, speaking against the Lawgivers in public) were formally expelled from earth folk society and from the lands beneath Creation. They were marched to the nearest exit point and driven out onto the surface, and their names and descriptions were circulated among all earth folk cities and mines to prevent them from entering again. Exile was the only punishment among the earth folk, but it was an effective one. Some earth folk exiles became criminals, others traders, and others found employment with the Exalted. Many simply lay down before the doors to the underground and died there, starving to death.

Not only did it contain a number of important manses, but it was connected to many functioning factory-cathedrals and major cities. Unlike the air folk, who could be driven North, or the sea folk, who could be driven West, the earth folk were everywhere under the ground. They couldn't be monitored. They couldn't be predicted. They couldn't be controlled.

The only safe thing to do was to get rid of the earth folk.

The Dragon-Blooded seized earth folk records and maps at their major underdomes in order to have a clear picture of the earth folk distribution across Creation. They then coordinated channeled earthquakes and dedicated strike teams to wipe out city after city. While a few scattered enclaves of earth folk endured deep in their mines, the majority of earth folk who survived were those who fled to the Mountain Folk and begged for refuge. Although few Jadeborn cared about the politics of the Exalted, some of them felt sympathy with a created people who were now hated and distrusted by the Exalted. Also, the earth folk had always dealt fairly with the Jadeborn and had honored Autochthon respectfully. Several Mountain Folk states in the North and South hid groups of earth folk among their population and lied to the Terrestrial Exalted who came to check that they had been wiped out, claiming that they had turned the earth folk away and were uninterested in Exalted or human affairs.

The earth folk were left in shock after the fall of their cities and the destruction of so many of their kind. Their laws and records had been lost, their maps stolen, and the debts and kinship networks thrown into total chaos. While the iconoclastic ones were better able to adapt, the more rigid earth folk retreated into their previous habits, forming new families in an attempt to rebuild their social structure.

Meanwhile, the Jadeborn felt responsible for their new acquisition. Since they considered the earth folk to be sadly weak (in comparison with the Jadeborn, at least), they improved their bodies by giving them the Exalted Healing mutation. This generosity, combined with the loss of the Solars and the cruelty of the Dragon-Blooded, influenced the earth folk's faith. They slowly turned from their previous worship of the Incarnae to full adoration of Autochthon, with a bare minimum of prayers being made to the other gods.

It was Ban In-Per-Thel, one of the surviving members of the Authority, who suggested that the earth folk should integrate fully with Jadeborn society. Ban had always been as close as any man of the earth folk could get to being a rebel. He had spent his youth as an explorer before moving into the administration and had always been known for the precision and fairness of his judgments. Ban pointed out that firstly, the Lawgivers were gone, meaning that the Debt to them was void. Secondly, the surviving earth folk now owed a Debt to the Jadeborn. Thirdly, to continue in their previous way of life was now impossible, as their best mines were lost and their cities broken. Fourthly, they were far more like the Jadeborn than they were like normal humans in any case, so why not embrace the similarity?

By the time the Great Contagion struck hundreds of years later, the people of the earth had long since begun dwelling in enclaves within Jadeborn territories. The Mountain Folk promptly sealed off their cities that were not yet contaminated, remaining in contact through their echo jewel communications network. Naturally, this facility was not available to the earth folk, as it was restricted to priority messages. Those earth folk who were fortunate enough to be inside the sealed cities (rather than being in the infected ones and dying by the score) were isolated even further, with only a few families remaining in some cities. By the end of the Contagion, fewer than 1,000 of the earth folk remained alive.

When the Balorian Crusade swept across Creation, the disruption to Essence flows cut off all communication between Jadeborn city-states, and the consuming Wyld entirely

Jadeborn and Earth Folk

The Jadeborn view the earth folk much as the Dragon-Blooded view un-Exalted family members or as the citizens of Halta view san-beasts: as members of a group who are similar to them and who think in a similar way, but who lack a crucial degree of power, ability or intelligence, even though the occasional individual can rise to near-equality. There's also a degree of patronizing affection involved. The Mountain Folk *like* the earth folk. After all, they try so hard, and they work so hard, and they worship the Great Maker, and it's not *their* fault that they're weak and fragile and live such short lives. By now, the Jadeborn feel thoroughly responsible for the earth folk living among them, and they'd protect them—even from themselves, if the earth folk should do something risky or unwise, or that might endanger the Jadeborn.

devoured several outlying territories. The Scarlet Empress's activation of the Sword of Creation turned back the Fair Folk, but it also produced earthquakes throughout Creation, causing massive rockfalls in the remaining Mountain Folk cities. The Jadeborn did their best to protect the comparatively fragile earth folk, but even so, more of them were lost.

With the Scarlet Empress in power, the Jadeborn began to rebuild, and the earth folk slowly began to re-establish themselves. Their nascent population assembled in several surviving Mountain Folk city-states (Dijak and Teffa in particular) in order to have enough living bodies to form communities, marry and so on. It was promptly agreed that the Debt owed to the Jadeborn should be entered as the Fourth Great Debt and that the earth folk should integrate with Jadeborn society as a matter of immediate survival. The Authority at that time, Veli An-Dach-Tel, negotiated with the Jadeborn ruling caste to establish legal rights and privileges for the earth folk (rather than simple toleration as guests) and future arrangements for expansion and mining. Her foresight included clauses for earth folk family groups or explorers to operate independently without Jadeborn oversight as long as they were not on Jadeborn territory at the time.

While a few scattered remnants of the earth folk had survived the Usurpation, the Great Contagion and invasion outside the Mountain Folk citadels, they were now totally isolated and unable to contact the main body of the race. (Indeed, they generally didn't realize that there *were* any other survivors of the race.) By now, these groups were severely inbred and, in some cases, Wyld-tainted as well. While their location deep beneath the ground kept them safe from many of the common dangers, they lived in a constant struggle with the Darkbrood, the more elemental dangers of the Wyld, shadowlands and First Age remnants that had been driven into the tunnels during the Usurpation.

In the time since the Scarlet Empress took power, the Dragon-Bloods gradually became aware that there are earth folk living among the Mountain Folk. The Scarlet Empress's official policy on the matter was to live and let live. If the earth folk kept within Mountain Folk territory and followed the same treaties as the Mountain Folk, then she had no reason to pursue them. While she would have been interested in negotiations with separatist colonies of earth folk, to use their mining skills, these were so rare that the situation never arose.

Current Situation

The earth folk in Creation can be divided into two types: those who have assimilated into the Mountain Folk, and those who remain independent. Very few people (including the earth folk living with the Jadeborn) have actually encountered the still-independent earth folk. Few people even know they exist. When savants discuss the earth folk, they mean the ones living with the Jadeborn. In fact, some inaccurate records suggest that the earth folk are actually products of Jadeborn/human crossbreeding.

In the present day, there are perhaps 100,000 earth folk scattered across Creation in Jadeborn city-states. In the Jadeborn city-states of Dijak and Teffa, earth folk make up close to 10 percent of the population. Other city-states have earth folk enclaves numbering from 500 to 5,000 people. There is constant movement of earth folk between the city-states, though a high proportion of the travelers are earth folk with enlightened Essence, being sent elsewhere for training, helping supervise trade and supply caravans, and so on. Ordinary earth folk require a significant reason to travel outside their city-state. There is no room for simple journeying for pleasure or exploration.

The earth folk in any Jadeborn city-state usually have their living quarters in the same area or clusters of living quarters close together. It is easier for architectural planners to arrange heating or supplies for general areas, rather than to single dwellings scattered across a whole district of domestic quarters. Ordinary people of the earth are typically treated like unenlightened members of the undercastes, except that their living conditions are somewhat more comfortable because they are less sturdy. Earth folk with enlightened Essence are considered the legal equivalent of Enlightened members of the undercastes and lead lives of relative comfort. They are especially valued because (unlike the Jadeborn) they can learn sorcery. Indeed, earth folk with the potential to do so are *expected* to do so, to maximize their contribution to the city-state.

While earth folk in Jadeborn city-states work side by side with the Jadeborn and are subject to Jadeborn laws, there is also an Authority in each earth folk enclave who is responsible for recording and adjudicating all matters of Debt. This includes marriage, adoptions, work arrangements between earth folk, trade expeditions for supplies used only by earth folk and dealings between earth folk and other races when

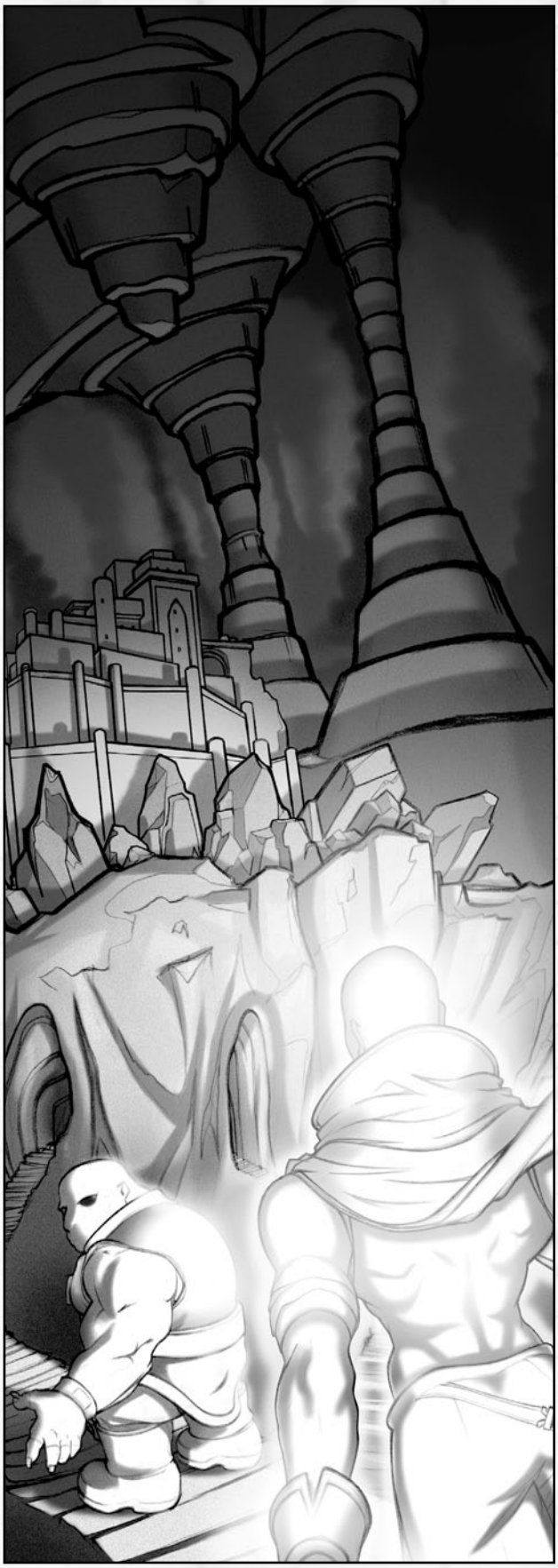
the Jadeborn don't wish to be involved. (This arrangement was established by Veli An-Dach-Tel, who saw a possible future point when the earth folk might wish to once again build their own cities and maintain an allied-but-separate relationship with the Jadeborn.) First Age attitudes toward obligation and respecting one's elders still apply, though the situation of a child having enlightened Essence when the parents aren't (and thus being higher in caste than them) can make for difficult social situations. The traditional solution is for the child to move to another city-state and be adopted by parents there with enlightened Essence.

Human Prejudice

In some ways, it's easier for normal humans to tolerate the earth folk because they're so obviously different. The air folk can hide their wings and the sea folk can hide their gills, and both of them can *look* normal, but with the earth folk, a human always knows where she stands. It facilitates dealing with them as a completely separate race. Normal humans don't expect a typical human mindset from them and, therefore, aren't surprised when they don't get it. Once a human being gets over the initial shock, it's fairly straightforward to regard the person of the earth as a regular person who just happens to have bright blue skin and featureless black eyes. It's not as if they had wings or gills, after all. They're practically normal.

While the earth folk have assimilated into Jadeborn society, their personal aesthetics are still their own. Their living quarters and workplaces inside Jadeborn city-states are decorated with recognizably Old Realm designs and carvings, and they still use the Old Realm language for recording Debts. They also retain some of their First Age records of mines and geography, including the location of some of their great cities before the Dragon-Blooded looted and collapsed them. These are a great secret of the Authority and are not even shared with the Jadeborn. (It was decided that it was inappropriate to use this information to pay the Jadeborn, as it was something held in trust for the future of the earth folk as a race.)

Those earth folk living outside the Jadeborn cities, in tiny enclaves on the edge of the Wyld or in caverns deep beneath the earth, live in constant danger and struggle to exist. They are small (a few hundred at most) and have no time for debt beyond the day-to-day balance of owed favors, or for civilization, or for any mining beyond what is necessary for immediate ore requirements for weapons. Some of them have been mutated by the Wyld, and where this would have been grounds for exile in the First Age, it is now ignored unless it is actually dangerous to the group, as every living member is needed for survival. There is no room for anything else.



People of the Earth

Quiet, mild-mannered and socially stable, the earth folk have apparently assimilated into the Mountain Folk city-states. They adhere to ancient traditions involving the obligations that one owes to creators, family and friends, and they pay back what they owe to the last obol either in thanks or in vengeance. They were almost obliterated by the Dragon-Blooded after the Usurpation, and while they make no moves against them for the moment, that debt is also remembered. They have held what they owe to the Lawgivers who created them in abeyance for hundreds of years.

Earth folk are clearly inhuman, with bright azure skin, huge black eyes and claws. Yet, they carry themselves with an innate gentleness and calm that subconsciously reassures those around them, and they are soft-spoken, raising their voices only in emergencies. They are accustomed to working together, viewing this as the natural response to problems, and while they can function perfectly in the endless dark depths of the earth, they are also capable of managing on the surface of Creation without any problems.

Clothing and Weapons: Earth folk clothing is functional and practical, even in private or at leisure. Workers wear simple tunics and breeches, and both sexes dress alike. Savants, thaumaturges and others with sedentary occupations wear plain robes. There is no aesthetic for decoration of clothing or embroidery. The closest that earth folk come is knotted cords worn in particular patterns as belts or necklaces. They use many of the same weapons as the Jadeborn, typically crossbows and skirmish pikes, with the occasional flamethrower or similar alchemical fire weapon carried by one member of a squad.

Mutations: All people of the earth possess the Claws, "Fur," Longevity and Night Vision (x2) poxes and the Wall Walking blight. Those who dwell among the Jadeborn also have the Exalted Healing affliction. Possessing the Night Vision pox twice allows people of the earth to see in total darkness as well as ordinary mortals can in full daylight. Although they are protected as if they had the Fur pox, people of the earth have exceedingly tough azure skin rather than actual fur.

Associations: the color black, burrowing creatures, the earth, the Center direction

Sobriquets: Blessed of the Earth, Burrowers, Diggers, Earth Folk, Molemen

Concepts: Darkbrood fighter, debt repayer, explorer, thaumaturge, trader seeking surface contacts, Wyld-mutant from isolated colony

THE WYLD HUNT WILL NEVER FIND YOU HERE, YOUR EXCELLENCY. NOW, PLEASE FOLLOW US. WE HAVE TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

The People of the Sea

The sea folk were engineered in the First Age to extend the dominion of the Exalted beneath the waters of Creation. For centuries, they enjoyed the best of both worlds, being able to live both below the waves and on land. When they dwell on the surface now, they are often assumed to be beastmen (or worse, Lintha) and must live as outcasts or menials on the outskirts of human communities. Beneath the waves, matters are not much better. The glory days of the First Age are gone, many of the technologies and skills that maintained the undersea kingdoms are lost, and Lintha, Wyld mutants and pelagothropes press on sea folk territories. Even the undead now walk the seabed. Skeletons and zombies have no need to breathe, and the Silver Prince uses them to harvest the ocean bottom and clear the way for his future empire.

The people of the sea hold no grudges against the Solars or against the Dragon-Blooded (who mostly left them to their own folk after the Usurpation) or even against normal humans. While they hardly like being treated as second-class citizens or freaks of nature, they view normal humans as pitifully disadvantaged, unable to enjoy the true bounties of the waters. Sea folk who are able to leave humanity behind and enjoy the boundless depths are more inclined to this point of view, while those sea folk who have to live on land and regularly interact with humans are less patronizing and rather more bitter.

Origins

The sea folk were an obvious project to the members of the Solar Deliberative. All the West lay open to development, but humans could not access the parts below the surface without significant investment in Essence-technology to pump air to underwater domes and cities or in artifacts that would allow them to survive underwater. In addition to the three main crafters, several other Twilight Castes competed to create the most efficient and elegant model of water-breathing human. In the end, the Deliberative was forced to adjudicate and instruct the Twilight crafters to combine their designs. High Fantastic Dream took credit for the main parts of the crafting on the gills, though Lucid Topaz was acknowledged for his work on combining longevity with aesthetics and adjusting the human metabolism to consume plankton and particulate seaweed.

People of the sea look mostly like normal attractive Westerners, with the blue or green hair and blue-tinged skin often found in the West. Their most obvious abnormalities are the elegant gill slits that extend down their neck and a palm's breadth down their back. On land, the slits close and simply resemble unusually symmetrical scars. The sea folk also have tough webbing between the first joints of their fingers and the entire length of their overly long toes. While all these features can be concealed by appropriate clothing, the climate and fashions of the West make this difficult. Few Western cultures hide the hands or feet (especially when at sea) or conceal the neck. In fact, attempts to do so often arouse suspicion, on the grounds that the person must have some unpleasant reason for covering their body, such as Lintha heritage, Wyld mutations or worse.

The sea folk spread out to colonize the West underwater but also maintained a presence around the Western islands. They were shipwrights, able to mend ships from underwater without needing to dry-dock the vessel, and fishers and undersea miners and pearl divers and a thousand other things besides. They could perform as well out of the water as in it. Settlements spread into the Inland Sea and into Creation's great lakes and rivers.

Development

If one word could be used to describe the First Age sea folk, it would be happy. They were truly blessed, granted the freedom of both land and sea, and able to expand across the oceans and seas and lakes without having to compete for territory with normal humans in the way that the air folk did. The Exalted built them great undersea cities of glass and gold and granite, with magnificent domes and sweeping arches and pinnacles. In some stretches of the ocean, a sailor could look down from his ship and see the sea folk's buildings in the clear deeps below, glinting like distant stars. Some of their outposts were mines, where they dug out rare minerals and gems for the Exalted, while others were great fisheries, where they herded great flocks of fish to be harvested and processed. Yet others were observatories and laboratories and factory-cathedrals, tapping Essence-flows on the seabed and building networks of manses down there.

Many a First Age Exalt had a private seabed manse with a loyal staff of sea folk, where she could retreat to work in privacy. Faced with potential squabbles over seabed territory among the Lawgivers, the Deliberative ruled that specific demesnes in the neutral ocean belonged to whichever Exalt found and developed them first, though the military could commandeer their Essence flows if necessary to prevent Wyld incursions.

While the sea folk pushed back the unexplored boundaries of the West, they also established cities under the main trade routes. Many ships were saved when becalmed or during storms by sea folk swimming up to bring food and water, to help mend their ships so they could reach land or even to offer sailors shelter in some of the air-filled rooms they kept for guests. All sea folk cities had some rooms that were sorcerously pressurized and filled with normal air, for the comfort of Exalted or human visitors who didn't wish to adjust their metabolisms via Charms or sorcery.

The sea folk had their own wars, battling against the pelagothropes and the siakamen that came in from the Wyld. By its nature, the Great Western Ocean was prone to currents and drift, meaning that tainted tides could come in from the Wyld to put a wide area at risk or corrupt a whole settlement before the alarm could be raised. While sea folk patrols could alert their Exalted masters in the case of a large-scale emergency, they were often faced with the

task of destroying a Wyld incursion and slaughtering all the resulting Wyld mutants themselves. This responsibility became a matter of honor. Famous legends were told about Brack Two-Spear, who held the Great Gorge against the charge of the seal-mutants until he died of a hundred wounds (none on his back), or Ellahna Tidesinger, who called up an earthquake that destroyed her own home city when the Wyld overran it. The Wyld was the enemy, and it was noble and heroic to resist it.

Many sea folk had some training in thaumaturgy or in handling Essence flows. Their underwater cities often depended on great First Age engines to manage water flow or support the infrastructure, and the Essence technology had to be cared for and tended. It was a matter of practicality to enable the sea folk to manage this themselves so that they wouldn't need attention from Exalted or from normal human thaumaturges all the time. As the sea folk colonies spread further toward the Western horizon, it became possible for a typical member of this blessed race to live out her life in the water, never coming to land and never meeting a normal human. Those sea folk who were based in the Inland Sea or an inland lake didn't suffer such a degree of separation, but they didn't have the same degree of independence. Sea folk cities based closer to human habitation or trade routes usually had strong links with the nearby lands, for trade, military service and duty to the Exalted.

Sea folk society was a meritocracy, with a leader selected by a council of elders (subject to Lawgiver approval). Gender equality and universal education were cornerstones of sea folk life, helping to produce the thaumaturges and savants who supported the undersea cities. Yet, the great unspoken assumption of sea folk life (and the great blind spot) was that the most important thing for any man or woman of the sea folk was his or her ability to swim, to know the waters and to survive the great depths. Even the elders and the savants were capable of far surpassing any normal human underwater. Children who failed to reach the proper standards of sea craft were quietly abandoned on beaches, left to make a life on land or die alone, with the understanding that "they would never have been happy living down here properly with us." Adults who showed weakness in those areas would never rise to any position of true power or influence, but would spend their lives in menial tasks, however great their potential might have been. The ocean had no room for weakness.

The Usurpation and the Contagion

The sea folk fought bravely and loyally in defense of the Lawgivers during the Usurpation, and the only reason that *more* of them didn't die was the sheer scope of the West. The news simply didn't get to many of the underwater cities until too late. Even then, the sea folk who would have fought for their masters couldn't reach the fighting in time. While military Essence technology could traverse the West fast enough, taking control of it had been one of the priorities of the Usurpation. The Dragon-Blooded (and the Sidereals) could easily see the potential of the Solars being able to move themselves and their forces freely around the West, and had made taking control of the main nexuses and means of transport a high-level priority. Those areas of the West that weren't shattered by the fighting could only accept the fait accompli and come to terms with their new masters.

Abiding Loyalty

While the sea folk leaders swore loyalty to the Dragon-Blooded with all the proper forms and words, many of them still hoped that the Solars might return or that they could be saved from whatever the Dragon-Blooded had done to them. The mechanism of Exaltation was hardly a secret, and while the sea folk knew that the Solars could be killed, they also knew that new Solars would rise to take their place. The fact that the Dragon-Blooded had utterly wiped them out was new and foreign and entirely incomprehensible.

Many sea folk believed that the Lawgivers must still be out there, *somewhere*. Surreptitious search parties across Creation hunted for traces of imprisoned Solars. Sadly, they never once had the slightest idea that the Jade Prison existed, let alone that it was hidden in the ocean depths.

Even today, the people of the sea dream of the return of the long-lost Lawgivers and pray to the Unconquered Sun that he might show mercy and return his chosen ones to govern the world once more in righteousness and save it from the shadows of corruption. They remember the glory of the First Age, and while they can accept the Terrestrial Exalted for the moment, they will throw all their strength behind the Solars when they return. Assuming that they recognize them.

The only danger would be if the returning Solars didn't live up to the sea folk's expectations, nurtured lovingly for centuries. That could be bad.

The Shogunate stripped the more accessible undersea metropolises of their First Age Essence-driven technology, leaving only the bare minimum necessary to sustain the cities (and not even that, in some cases). As with the minikins, those sea folk who were trained in the maintenance and upkeep of the First Age mechanisms were conscripted for life, driven to exhaustion to keep the devices running in the absence of the Solars who had designed them.

Centuries later, one of the sea folk, Kalikan the Last Master (as he is remembered), began to speak of rebellion.

His Essence was awakened, and he was a thaumaturge and warleader who had fought back Wyld incursions many times. He was a hero, respected by the sea folk, he was a notable strategist, and he predicted that the time would come when the Shogunate's grip would be more desperate, and when the sea folk might have a chance to rise up in rebellion and escape the Terrestrial Exalted's rule. He began to gather an army, and allies of his smuggled him stolen bits of Essence technology to arm and equip his warriors.

When the Contagion struck, however, it killed the living creatures of the waters just as it killed those on the land. Sea folk died as readily as humans did, and Kalikan's nascent army was wiped out before it could be used. His caches of First Age technology were lost with him.

The timing could hardly have been worse. Just when the sea folk had lost the cream of their warriors and weapons, the Fair Folk invaded. Cities that had miraculously survived the chaos of the Usurpation and barely managed to endure the Contagion disappeared into the Wyld, lost in tides of chaos-tainted waves and shadows. Great Gorgomire with her waterfall curtains and her crystal domes; sweet Isinerende, where sculpted seaweed and sea moss formed ever-moving patterns of color across the city; dark Dissomer of the hidden depths, where veins of orichalcum were mined from the very bottom of the sea bed; Onderaine in the North, where the buildings were carved from ice and yet were never too cold… All were lost to the Wyld, and many more beside.

The sea folk fought shoulder to shoulder with humans, Dragon-Bloods and Lunars, throwing themselves into a last-ditch attempt to hold back the Wyld. They did not truly expect to win. A certain degree of fatalism had always been one of the race's main character traits, and after all the previous calamities, this just seemed to be the finishing touch, the end of all Creation. Courage and persistence kept them at their posts, even though all hope of victory seemed lost.

When the Scarlet Empress activated the defense grid and threw the Fair Folk back from the borders of Creation, the sea folk were as confused about what to do next as the normal humans. Some small enclaves of sea folk tried offering her their formal loyalty. They were tolerated at first, since the Empress was not going to turn down any support for her throne, but they soon found themselves marginalized by the newly drafted Immaculate dogma, second-class citizens who were tolerated for their abilities but expected to stay well away from the Realm. Others withdrew entirely from human-occupied islands, building new settlements or repairing old ones on the seabed or on islands that were unsuitable for normal human occupation. (The sea folk could harvest additional supplies from the sea and didn't have to depend on above-water sea routes.) Perhaps two-thirds of the sea folk

remained in their previous stance, cooperating with human-inhabited islands and working with human navies and trade fleets, living partly on land and partly in water.

The growth of the Immaculate faith and the increasingly common misconception that the sea folk were Wyld mutants made it more and more difficult for the people of the sea to maintain their relationship with citizens of the Scarlet Empire. Meanwhile, the Coral Archipelago was building itself into a nation of pirates and raiders, and the shadowlands where the Silver Prince now holds court were growing wider with every passing year. Most of the sea folk who lived in the White Sea or the Inland Sea, or in inland lakes and rivers, drifted to the West or withdrew from human territories. In the East, the Linowan and the Haltan people made war on each other, and the Linowan exterminated the few sea folk who dwelled in their great rivers, assuming that they were part-human spies for the Haltans. The sea folk themselves turned away from their previous pure veneration of the Incarnae and began honoring local water deities as well, in search of immediate benefits and protection.

Current Situation

While the sea folk are no more welcome among humans than any of the other crafted races, they can at least withdraw to the ocean depths. Yet, if they wish to truly re-establish themselves as a group to be respected and feared, and perform their ancient task of holding back the Wyld, then they need connections and allies among the human race. They need assistance with rebuilding some of their First Age ruins, and they need aid in fighting the mutants with whom they are so often confused.

Sea folk in many different communities have come to the conclusion that they need to seek a rapprochement with humans, but they differ as to how to achieve it. Some favor making a pact with the Scarlet Empire, pointing out that, in the Empress's absence, this is an excellent opportunity to ally with one or more of the Great Houses and earn their gratitude. Others look to Lookshy or the Haslanti, seeing them as opportunists who are rising in power. Some even suggest joining the Confederation of Rivers, if a sea folk settlement could move to an appropriate body of water in the area. A few even whisper that the ancient Lawgivers have returned and that it is time for the people of the sea to support them.

Major sea folk settlements include the island of Seahome, west of Abalone, where sea folk and outcaste Dragon-Blooded work together to push back the Wyld; Oceanmouth, in the depths below the edge of the White Sea; Darkwater, south of Skullstone and north of the Neck; and Jalarin, a warped First Age city deep in the Western Bordermarches.

Seahome has more than 6,000 people of the sea living there. Although it is located within the tainted lands, a jade obelisk protects the island and its inhabitants from the Wyld. Its people have bred with outcaste Dragon-Blooded and water elementals for centuries, and today, it includes a few hundred God-Blooded and more than a dozen Dragon-Blooded people of the sea. They also offer refuge to Western female Dragon-Blooded "lost eggs" who seek rights for themselves in the mainly patriarchal cultures of the West. As a result, Seahome is often stigmatized as an island of water-breathing women with sorcerous powers and loose morals. Seahome is looking for allies to help push back the Wyld and has some salvaged-but-damaged First Age artifacts to sweeten the deal. (The island is governed by a council of savants and has a strong respect for scholarship and the study of magic.) The Tya trade with it, but secretly, as known association with Seahome would damage their own reputation as neutrals in the rest of the West.

Oceanmouth lies in the deep waters where the White Sea meets the Great Western Ocean. It is a constant victim of strong tides and nearby tribes of pelagothropes. One small city of sea folk cannot bar the pelagothropes from the White Sea or hope to hold them off for long, but they're trying. Unfortunately, they're losing. The city's current leader, Zannin Sea-Furrower, is seeking help from any source possible, and one of his thaumaturges, Jezath the Seeker, has even suggested calling up demons for aid.

Darkwater is known to the Silver Prince, who courts it with suggestions of alliance. His emissaries point out that the humans of the Skullstone Archipelago live happily and well, and claim that the sea folk would be honored partners, respected and accepted by the humans, with full trading privileges and rights as citizens. The main reason that the sea folk haven't yet accepted is that their leader, Rennis Wavelight, firmly believes in the promised return of the Solars and refuses to ally with anyone except them. He is bigoted and stubborn, but that stubbornness is keeping the Darkwater settlement away from the Silver Prince at the moment. For his part, the Silver Prince would very much like the sea folk as shipwrights for his hidden vessels—living or dead.

Jalarin is a tragedy. It was an underwater metropolis, a jewel of the First Age, that was ruined in the Usurpation and then swallowed by the Wyld during the Fair Folk invasion. The sea folk who were trapped inside it at the time have become aquatic barbarians, adapting to the Wyld by becoming living tales of honorable, fearless, merciless pirates. All but one of the city's crystal domes are shattered, and all knowledge of First Age wonders has been lost. The Jalarinites have lost their history, their past and all memory of resisting the Wyld. Their mental assimilation has kept them relatively sane and allowed them to remain free of mutations, but it has destroyed their culture. Now they attack ships around Coral, Skullstone and the Neck, selling prisoners to the Fair Folk as slaves. The population includes several dozen Fae-Blooded people of the sea, who are the city's finest shamans and emissaries to the Fair Folk. The Jalarinites even go so far as to employ siakamen as shock troops and marines. The sea folk who once fought the Wyld to their last drop of blood now serve it and help it expand.

People of the Sea

The sea folk were crafted to have the best of both worlds, land and sea. They could endure the great depths and never need to surface, or they could live on land without a moment's difficulty. They spread across the waters of Creation in territories that nobody else could inhabit and fought back the tides of the Western Wyld with heroic determination. Even now, with their greatest cities lost, their people scattered and Creation viewing them as no better than the beastmen of the Wyld, they persevere.

Their customs—equality of gender, meritocracy and personal strength—have descended with them from the First Age, and they tolerate humans far better than humans tolerate them. Although they abandon their children if they are weak, they believe they do so for the children's own good. The only thing they cannot abide is the Wyld and all that comes from it, and they fight against it with the resources that remain to them, while waiting for the Solar Exalted to return. Like water, they are scattered across Creation, even though they are most common in the West, and like the water again, they are persistent, adaptable and enduring.

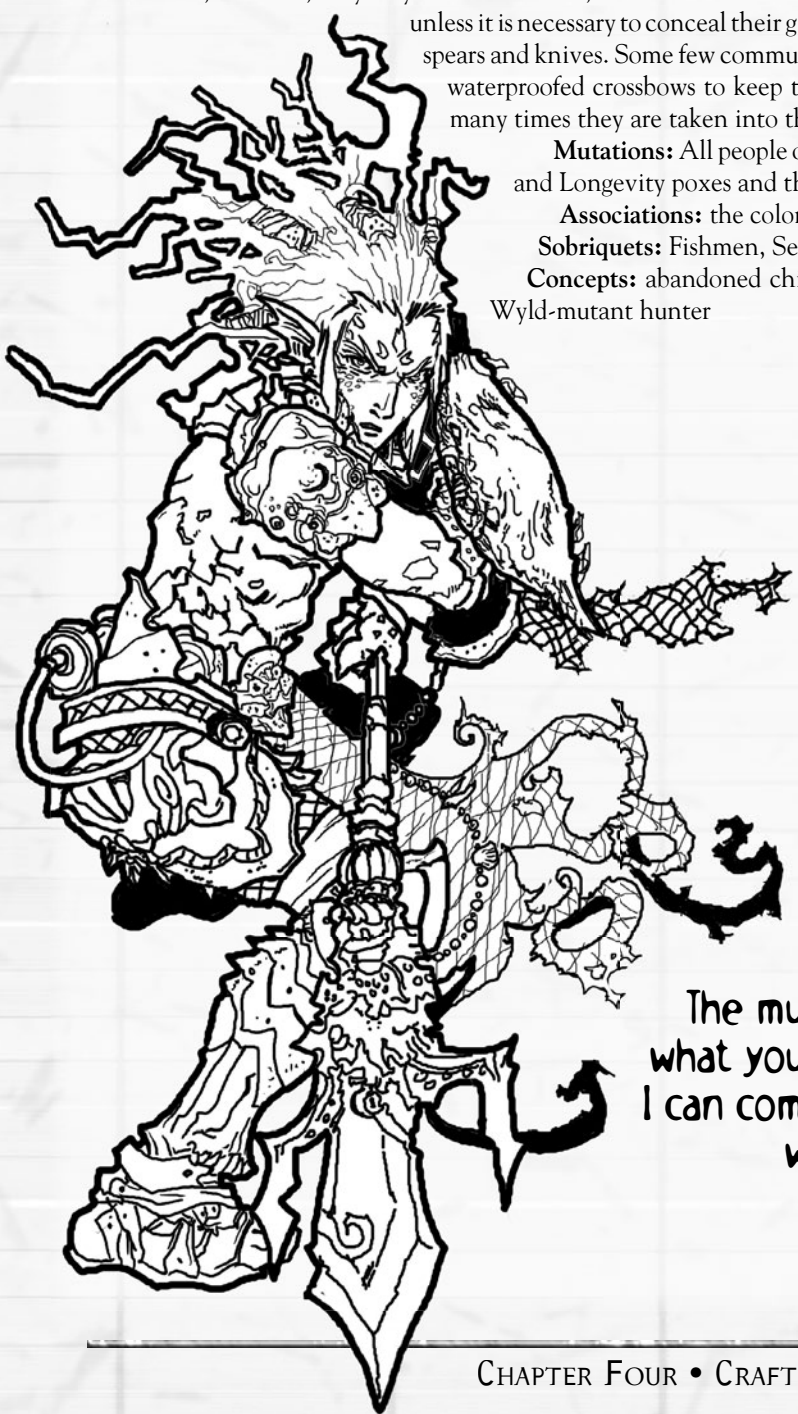
Clothing and Weapons: Sea folk prefer to wear nothing more than a loincloth, with jewelry for decoration. If respecting local customs, however, they may add breastbands, tunics or even robes. They do not wear scarves or other neck-coverings unless it is necessary to conceal their gills. For weapons, they favor harpoons, tridents, nets, spears and knives. Some few communities possess the secret of crafting thaumaturgically waterproofed crossbows to keep the cord and firing mechanism functional however many times they are taken into the water.

Mutations: All people of the sea possess the Elemental Adaptation (Water) and Longevity poxes and the Gills affliction.

Associations: the color blue, water, fishes and frogs, the Western direction

Sobriquets: Fishmen, Sea Folk, Swimmers

Concepts: abandoned child, alliance seeker, explorer, hedonist, shipwright, Wyld-mutant hunter



The mutants are coming no matter what you do to me. If you release me, I can come back with help. If you don't, we're all going to die.

The Djala

In some ways, the Djala have had to win back everything they once lost. They are known in Creation today as a comparatively small and delicate race of people, frequently seen as slaves or servants. Those who can trace the race's history back to the First Age can produce records of them being smaller still, barely two and a half feet tall at most, and assume that they were created at the time by the ancient Solars and Lunars for their own purposes. The Djala themselves know little more than that.

Accurate First Age records, however, give a more detailed story. The Djala were originally an independent race with their own history and territory, until the Lawgivers chose to modify them into a smaller race of blessed mortals, specifically designed to serve them by tending Essence-based technologies. The new race was successful, but the true Djala were almost destroyed. The people that now claim that name are the descendants of the Lawgiver-created race and are too often considered slaves or servants by the rest of Creation.

Origins

In the millennia that followed the founding of the Deliberative, the success of the air folk, the sea folk and the earth folk inspired other Solars to create their own versions of blessed humans. One of the most successful experiments was the race of minikins. These were created by Owl-Over-Water, a Lunar scholar and sorcerer of the No Moon Caste, who wished to craft a race of miniature humans specially designed to repair advanced Essence-based devices. This was a very practical piece of work, rather than being purely aesthetic as some other experimental races were. While only the most powerful First Age artifacts required regular maintenance, many of them underwent regular upgrades, and all of them needed servicing if they were damaged. A race that was specifically designed to see to this work was an extremely economical direction of research.

Using the already short Djala people as her base, Owl-Over-Water created the minikins specifically to work in small areas, on and inside complex devices. Each minikin appeared to be one of the Djala people, only less than two and a half feet tall and with exceptionally flexible joints—and an innate ability to work Essence. The new blessed race was so successful that Owl-Over-Water extended invitations to more and more of the Djala people to report for modification and re-creation. Given the inevitable losses involved, there were soon tens of thousands of minikins working across Creation, but the original Djala territory was little more than a shell. In an act of kindness (and with an eye toward future breeding stock), the Lawgivers forbade other humans from resettling the area, leaving it to the comparatively few Djala who remained.

Development

Minikins soon became popular for many tasks besides thaumaturgical engineering: mining fragile materials, performing delicate surgery, acting as bodyguards for the children of the Lawgivers, spying and so on. Although they were considerably less numerous than the other races of blessed mortals at the time, there were soon more than 100,000 minikins working across Creation. All had enlightened Essence, and most knew at least some thaumaturgy, while many were skilled magitechnicians and accomplished sorcerers or martial artists.

The minikins were unique among the blessed mortals in that they had no homeland of their own. Instead of the Northern mountain cities of the air folk, the Western undersea metropolises of the sea folk or the underground caverns of the earth folk, they lived in cities or research installations all across Creation. Many such places contained special districts where the buildings, streets and other conveniences were built at 40 percent of human scale, made to fit the minikins. Because need for their services was limited in any one place, however, even the largest factory-cathedrals had communities of only 2,500 or so minikins. The minikins were also transferred around as need demanded. While some efforts were made to allow them to preserve family groups or married couples, the requirements of the Lawgivers' technology were ultimately paramount.

Very few minikins wanted to go back to the Djala homeland in the Southeast. They generally enjoyed their new status as expert operatives and favored servants of the Exalted, and were more interested in this new life than in the old ways of farming, hunting and crafting. The remaining Djala in their homeland were well-provided-for, as mortals in Creation went, as the Exalted wanted to preserve the racial stock and make sure that they didn't try to move elsewhere or expand too much.

The minikins' small stature made it easy for humans to patronize them, regarding them as no more than children, so the minikins preferred to associate with each other. The standard minikin social group was the family, and children in a family followed their parents' trades, trained in them from childhood onward unless they showed a very strong aptitude in another skill set. Parents would carry their babies and toddlers around with them in small backpacks while working on Essence-driven technology or be followed by their children once they were old enough to walk, explaining all the mechanics of the artifacts as they repaired them. Marriage was usually more of a work partnership than a matter of romance. Unfortunately, minikin women had trouble bearing children safely. While they had the best of medical care during pregnancy (as the Exalted valued their minikin servants), they were never as prolific as the other blessed races.

Djala racial pride became minikin pride in expertise. While the minikins felt a natural lack of enthusiasm toward the fact that everyone else was so much larger than them, they could be smug about their skill and their manipulation of Essence. They might be technicians and servants, but they viewed themselves as vitally important technicians and ser-

vants. They directed prayers to the gods to keep the devices running on schedule and to grant the minikins opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. As the minikins put it (in private), any fool could explore the Threshold or challenge the borders of Creation, but only a really skilled, intelligent minikin could keep the factory-cathedrals running.

While a proportion of minikins trained in the enlightened martial arts, this was a matter of leisure and skill rather than an immediate necessity for survival (except for the ones who were employed as spies and assassins). In general, the minikins were a prosperous and protected group, scattered across Creation, frequently traveling as they were assigned to new work locations, and cosmopolitan and well informed, since they were so often close to their Lawgiver masters.

The Usurpation's Effects

The Sidereals and Dragon-Blooded didn't want to kill the minikins, they wanted to use them. Minikins were a valuable resource, and while there was some "natural wastage" during the Usurpation and its aftermath (due to the destruction of Solar homes, cities and factory-cathedrals), approximately 50,000 minikins survived. The new Shogunate promptly declared them the property of the state. As such, they were protected and given a stipend for living expenses, but they lost any remnants of freedom, becoming basically slaves. (While they had not had a great deal more freedom under Solar rule, at least it had never been expressed in so crude a way.) All minikins who had been trained as spies or assassins were killed on sight—or hidden by their new owners.

Given the chaos going on around them, the minikins accepted their new station at first, assuming that new laws would be passed to grant them more freedom as soon as the current crisis was over. The situation became worse and worse, however. The shortage of minikins and the failure of city infrastructures and factory-cathedrals caused the Shogunate to work the minikins harder, to break up family groups so that everywhere was staffed and to reduce rations and pay for the duration of the emergency.

Their close access to communications technology allowed the minikins to consult each other across Creation while avoiding the notice of the Terrestrial Exalted. Led by the Anshias family, the Sterakes family and the Arpachis family, they decided after centuries of enslavement to flee to the Djala homeland and broker a price for their return and services.

The Great Contagion gave them that opportunity. Abandoning their work, taking a selection of choice portable artifacts with them and stealing flying devices or stowing away on ships and caravans, they traveled back toward their ancestral home. Those minikins who survived to reach it found that the Contagion was already there. Among their thefts, however, they had stolen portable pieces of First Age medical technology and land-cultivation devices. While nothing could stop the Contagion itself, they did manage to keep deaths from other sources and incidental infection down, and to farm the land despite the small numbers left to do it.

The living Djala were astonished at the return of their smaller relatives. Their land had been touched only lightly by the Usurpation and the Shogunate, so they knew little of what had been going on among the Exalted. When the minikins explained the situation to them, the Djala tribes agreed to give their kindred sanctuary, in return for the minikins sharing the Essence-based technology they had brought with them. The Contagion had left few enough people that there were no quarrels over territory.

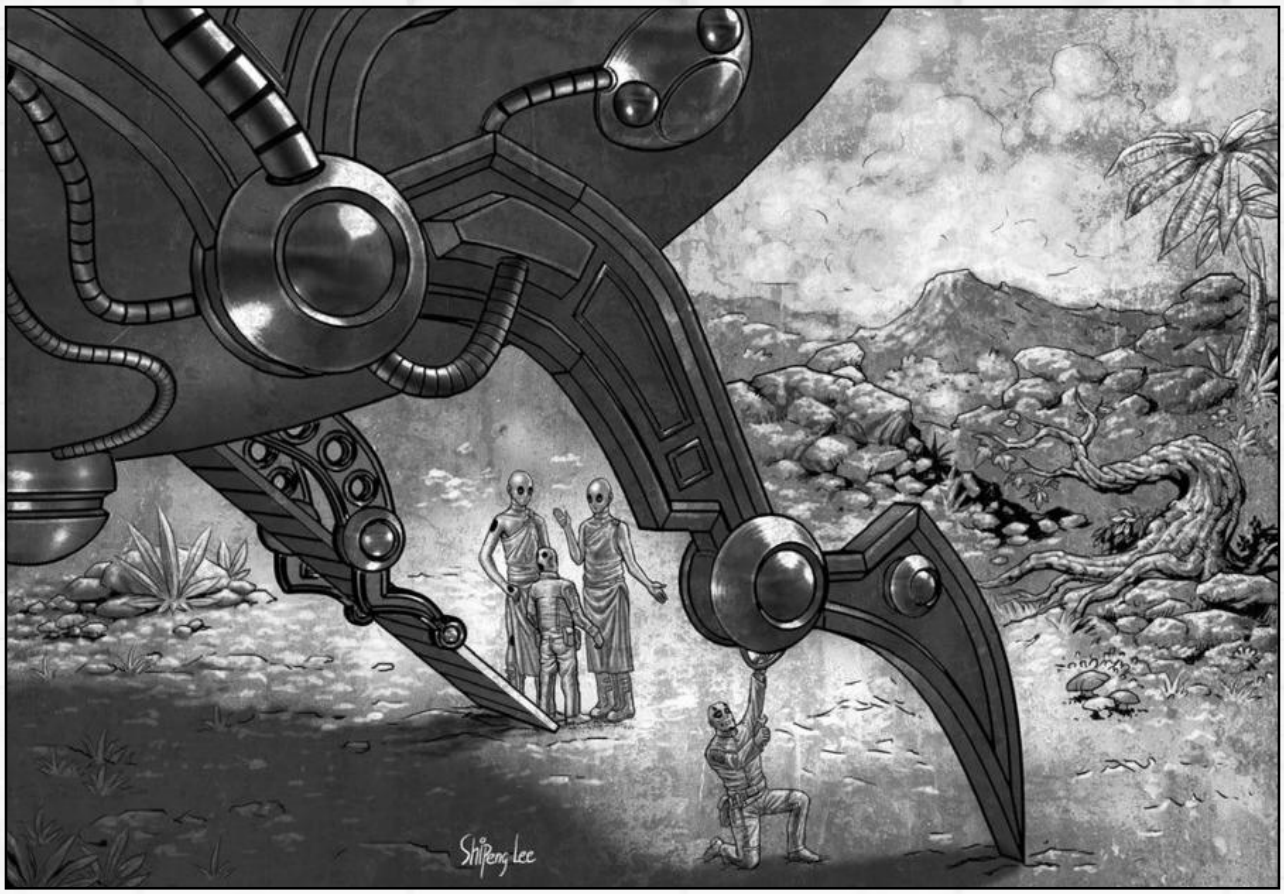
The Djala and the minikins began to intermarry. Owl-Over-Water's changes had left them interfertile, and over the decades, the Djala population began to stabilize, genetically carrying the best of both worlds. The "new Djala" had both the natural minikin advantages (Enlightened Essence and Longevity) and the natural Djala height and build. What they didn't plan on having was a reputation as slaves.

Even though the Scarlet Empress had now come to power, the Dragon-Blooded (and people across Creation) remembered the minikins as tireless, efficient, uncomplaining slaves. Even though the world had now changed enough that there wasn't the same need for technicians to maintain First Age artifacts, there was still plenty of need for slaves.

The Djala territory had always been protected by Lawgiver mandate in the First Age, preserved and untouched, and the Djala themselves had never needed to develop armies. They had hunters and warriors, and now that the minikins had been assimilated into the culture, they had enlightened martial artists, but they didn't have armies, and they didn't have a military structure that could protect the nation. Emerging nations and the Guild saw them as prime targets for enslavement. The fact that the average Djala was about four feet tall didn't help matters.

The Djala rapidly realized that their survival lay in submission. They didn't have the resources to fight back. The First Age artifacts that the minikins had retrieved or stolen were not weapons. They had some resources, but not on the scale of a city-state like Lookshy. Also, if other neighboring countries or the Realm became aware that they had First Age artifacts concealed, they would only be targeted more frequently and the entire nation might be occupied.

Of course, these decisions were taken by some of the most minikin-influenced families, at the heart of the Djala lands. The outlying families and tribes knew only that they were being raided more and more often and marched away in chains and that no help was coming from their respected leaders. Anger began to grow in the outlying Djala groups. Some of them realized that they could effectively save themselves by sacrificing others. The Guild was happy to broker arrangements in which it sponsored particular tribes in return for slaves taken by them from other tribes. Other countries, such as Varangia, were less subtle and simply made regular raids to take slaves from the nearest convenient source.



Current Situation

Inside Djalan territory, in the unraided areas, very little has changed since the First Age. The Djala live in small camps or tree-houses, where the panels of their tents and houses are woven from local silks camouflaged to match the foliage. They hunt the wild beasts of the land—more violent and varied than in the First Age, but still not uncontrollable—and they store fruits, nuts and lengths of edible vine for the winter.

What outsiders don't see are the deep villages, a recent development in the last hundred years, where the minikin-led arts are taught. Previously, the minikin skills were passed down among families, but now, the villages are open to all Djala who are sent there or who can find them. These villages are concealed in the depths of the jungle, with circles of watching camps. Here young Djala are trained in enlightened martial arts, in the defunct skills of maintaining First Age artifacts (mostly by rote, as there are few to repair here any more), in medicine and surgery, and in spying and assassination. Once trained, they go out to the Djala borders to help where they can, attacking slaver troupes and laying traps for raiders. The elders in these villages are notably smaller than the average Djala, as they are often descended from heavily minikin-bred families. The students are under orders not to display their abilities in front of strangers though. Some of them masquerade as traveling acrobatic troupes or pilgrims.

What do the Djala actually want? Primarily, they want to be left in peace. If someone handed them a First Age weapon that could safeguard their borders (or a Solar who could be persuaded to do so), they'd use it. In an ideal Creation, many Djala would enjoy being able to work on

Djalan Pilgrimages

Djalan religion worships the forest spirits as well as the Unconquered Sun, Luna and the Maidens, with tribal shamans offering sacrifices of fruit and flowers to all of them equally. (Djalan shamans are often thaumaturges and practice all Arts except the Art of the Dead and the Art of Demon Summoning.) A particular ritual that young Djala observe is to make a journey around Djalan territory, carrying flowers and branches from one area to the next, offering them to the spirits in that area, then picking new flowers to offer in the next area along. It is considered spiritual and virtuous, and it allows young Djala to travel around the country and learn more about their land and people. It also gets them away from their parents for a few months. Unfortunately, pilgrim bands (usually a dozen to several dozen youngsters) are prime targets for slave raiders, being young and healthy.

First Age artifacts as their ancestors did and as they have learned by rote to do. They still value expert service and tasks well performed as honorable, meritorious things—which is useful for the many Djala who end up as slaves and have to find some sort of meaning for their lives. While they are not servile by nature, the minikin nature was to work for a living, and the concepts of aristocracy and hereditary leadership have never really caught on among the Djala. While certain families are particularly well respected, all decisions come back to local councils of elders. Nobody can speak for the whole Djalan race. While this has led to the country's open borders and the enslavement of many of its citizens, it has also kept the secret of Djalan artifact stashes and hidden training villages.

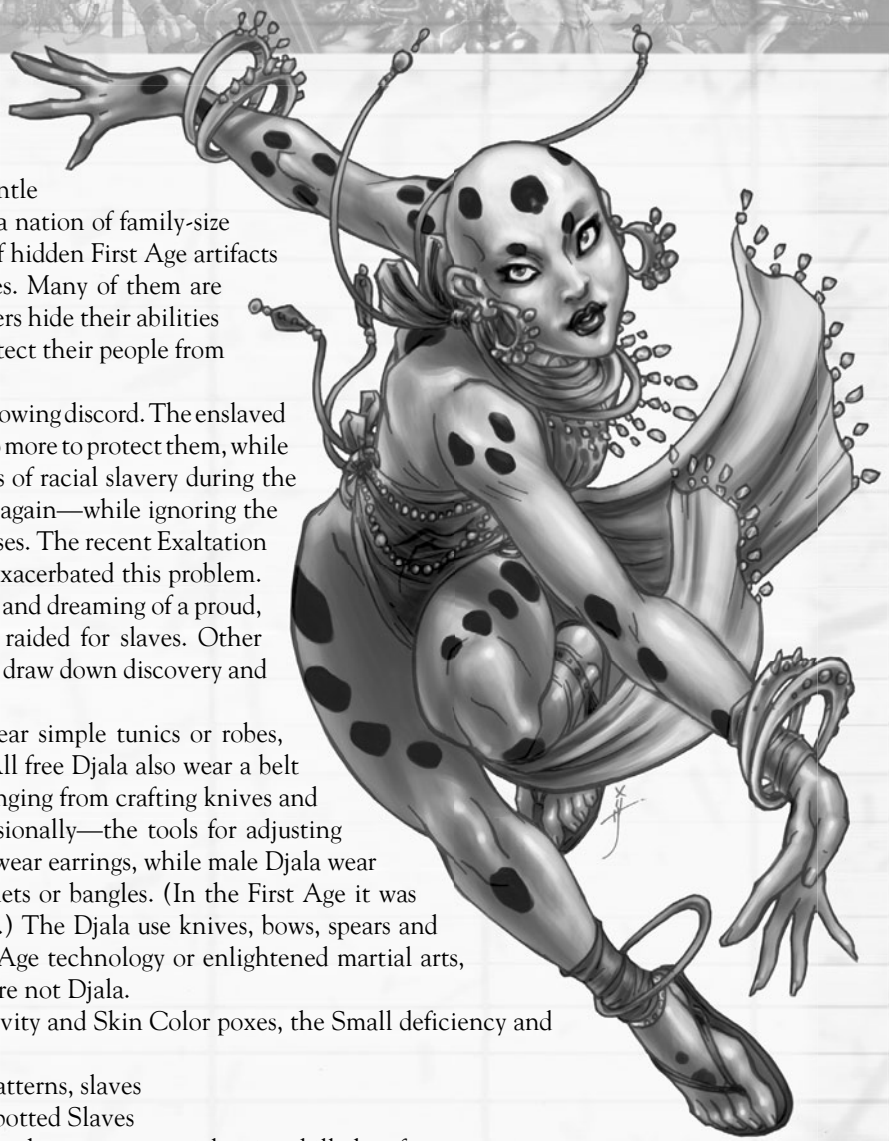
The Deathlords remember the minikins and watch the Djala with an eye to recruiting them for necrosurgical techniques, but so far, this has been unproductive. It is unclear whether this is because the enslaved Djala they used lack the appropriate skills or because the Djala are simply not in tune with the Abyssal energies being used. The Djala themselves do not practice ancestor worship, though some of the more rebellious enslaved Djala in the Threshold have formed small cults that worship any divinity that offers them a chance of freedom. As a result, it is that much harder for the Deathlords or their servants to influence Djalan society.

The Djala are ripe for change. The outer territories are bitter about the constant enslavement of their people. The inner territories are desperate to remain unobtrusive and hide their artifacts and skills. The spy-trained young Djala creep around the borders and ambush slavers or travel as groups to try to rescue other enslaved Djala. Meanwhile, the tens of thousands of Djala enslaved in the Threshold or on the Blessed Isle grow weary of their servitude and are inspired by tales of Faku Kun, the first known Djalan Solar Exalt.

Slave traders consider Djala to be moderately profitable. They are generally peaceable, calm, resigned to slavery and capable of small delicate tasks, but they lack size and strength. Enslaved Djala do not demonstrate their enlightened Essence, so the slavers and eventual masters have no idea of it (or think that the odd example is an isolated case). The Guild doesn't raid the Djala too heavily, not wanting to overload the market and force prices down. The most notable enslavers of Djala in the South are the Varang City-States, as enslaved Djala compose a vital part of their economy.

A few Djala have risen to become full citizens of Lookshy through loyal service to the city and have established a community of several dozen there, but they are so assimilated into the city's ways that they would not now choose to return home. Lookshy's rulers have correlated records from the Shogunate and the First Age with the current performance of their Djala and their skill at tending Essence-based weaponry. Based on what they've discovered, they are considering an alliance with the Djala (or at least, with a large enough Djala tribe), offering protection in return for technical expertise.

Djala



The Djala are descended from two sources: the minikins and the original gentle jungle-dwelling Djala. As a result, they are a nation of family-size groups and tribes, with occasional nexuses of hidden First Age artifacts and trained martial artists and thaumaturges. Many of them are slaves or servants across the Threshold. Others hide their abilities and their First Age knowledge, trying to protect their people from further investigation and domination.

This division in Djala society is causing growing discord. The enslaved Djala believe that their compatriots should do more to protect them, while the more educated Djala remember the days of racial slavery during the Shogunate and fear such a thing happening again—while ignoring the fact that it is already going on under their noses. The recent Exaltation of a Djala, the Night Caste Faku Kun, has exacerbated this problem. Many enslaved Djala are hoping for freedom and dreaming of a proud, independent nation that is not constantly raided for slaves. Other Djala see her as a potential threat that could draw down discovery and destruction.

Clothing and Weapons: Free Djala wear simple tunics or robes, made of silk or cotton to suit the climate. All free Djala also wear a belt that carries the tools of their occupation, ranging from crafting knives and scrapers to weapons to pens or—very occasionally—the tools for adjusting Essence-powered technology. Female Djala wear earrings, while male Djala wear necklaces. Few of either gender wear bracelets or bangles. (In the First Age it was necessary to keep the hands unencumbered.) The Djala use knives, bows, spears and hand-axes as weapons. A few can use First Age technology or enlightened martial arts, but they keep this a secret from those who are not Djala.

Mutations: All Djala possess the Longevity and Skin Color poxes, the Small deficiency and the Enlightened Essence blight.

Associations: ants, monkeys, spotted patterns, slaves

Sobriquets: Minikins, Panda People, Spotted Slaves

Concepts: escaped slave, First Age researcher, secret martial artist, skilled craftsman, spy

You're bigger and stronger than us, but there's only one of you. And none of us are scared of you anymore.

WELL, DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS PLACE YET?
YES! YES... I USED TO LIVE HERE. PLEASE...
DO YOU REMEMBER WHY THEY BURNED IT? BECAUSE OF YOUR SISTER, THEY SAID.
SHE GOT PREGNANT BUT DIDN'T KNOW. NOT UNTIL THE CHILD CAME.
I REMEMBER. IT WAS A DEMON.
HALF-DEMON. YOUR TEMPLE MONKS ACCUSED HER OF INFERNAL CONGRESS.
THEY CRUCIFIED HER. THEY THREW HER BABY OFF THE WATERFALL.
BUT IT WASN'T HER CHILD AT ALL! SHE WAS INNOCENT!
THE CHILD'S REAL MOTHER WAS A DEMON WHO LEFT IT WITH YOUR SISTER TO CARRY.
AND THE CHILD'S REAL FATHER WAS YOU!
HOW... HOW COULD YOU KNOW THAT?
BECAUSE MY MOTHER TOLD ME EVERYTHING!
ShiPeng Lee

CHAPTER FIVE

CHILDREN OF THE MIGHTY

Nearly every being naturally capable of channeling Essence can mate with mortals or animals to produce half-blooded offspring. Yet, not all do so. Some beings, such as the Primordials, rarely bothered doing so and of their infrequent dalliances with lesser beings only the degenerate Lintha remain. Creatures such as behemoths would destroy any humans or animals with whom they tried to couple. The Yozis and Neverborn have no need or desire to mate with mortals and are more than capable of creating servants and spawn in other ways.

The remaining Essence-users—the gods, demons, ghosts, Exalted and Fair Folk—can and do mate with mortals on occasion. The gods and elementals are particularly prolific in mixing with mortals and animals. It is for this reason that these half-breeds are collectively known as the God-Blooded. Other types of crossbreeds are given names based on their supernatural heritage: Demon-Blooded, Ghost-Blooded, Half-Caste (for offspring of the Exalted) and Fae-Blooded.

All God-Bloods are roughly equivalent in power to each other, though all have unique traits based on their parentage. They are capable of channeling and using Essence, though their mortal nature makes them somewhat less powerful and adept than their parents. God-Blooded tend to live longer than mortals, but they measure their extra years in decades instead of centuries. They are often hardier and healthier than most mortals, though their half-human status means they can sicken or succumb to poison and infection. They truly are a mixture of the mortal and magical. Also, the nature of their mixed blood means that few traits are universal among the God-Blooded. Some heal quickly and rarely tire, while others might be able to quickly master various skills. The children of powerful magical beings manifest

truly wondrous powers, such as immortality or immunity to elemental forces.

The God-Blooded are as diverse socially as they are physically. Some are aware of their nature and serve their supernatural parents as agents, spies, messengers, soldiers or assassins. Others go their entire existence without ever knowing the magical being whose blood flows through them. They walk the line between mortal and Exalt. Many find their destiny tied to both. Their relationships with their family and friends are no less diverse and complicated than those found among mortals. In fact, their family ties are usually even more complex and varied, made so by the presence of supernatural beings in their lives.

Birth

The exact details vary slightly between the heritages of the God-Blooded, but the standard rules of conception and pregnancy apply. Gestation takes the normal amount of time for the mother. Exalted take one year, mortal humans nine months and animals according to species. Gods, demons and elementals can bring children to term in minutes if they so desire.

Regardless of species, the God-Blood's supernatural blood sustains and protects the mother. Pregnancies are generally free of complications. Mothers tend to carry their children easily and with less discomfort than normal pregnancies. The actual birth is another matter.

Many mortal mothers do not survive birthing a God-Blood. A (Stamina + Resistance) roll must be made to determine survival. Success means the mother and baby are fine. Failure kills the mother but not the child. Magical beings never risk death from childbirth. Other guidelines regarding birth depend on heritage.

God-Blooded

Any god with a permanent Essence of 2 or higher can produce God-Blooded offspring as an innate power. Many spirits can even ignore gender and anatomical restrictions to do so. An earth elemental could visit his lover in the form of a gentle earthquake, or a river god could impregnate a woman who bathes in his waters. Animal gods often take the form of beasts while mating. Gods who strongly identify with a particular gender will not switch sexes when mating, and many female spirits don't have the disposition or temperament to carry a child to term. Fortunately, this is rarely a problem since spirits can usually find other ways to birth the child. Some spirits lay eggs, while others place the child in the womb of a mortal woman or animal.

Half-Castes and Exaltation

It is very unusual but not unheard of for Half-Caste children to eventually Exalt. Such children often retain some of the power and strangeness of their God-Blooded nature, but the act of Exaltation burns away much of their half-breed nature. Storytellers are completely within their rights to disallow such transformations, though they can provide a way to keep a God-Blood adventuring with Exalted from becoming overshadowed by his companions as they grow in power.

If such an event occurs, there are some special rules. The God-Blooded mutations are burned away by the power of the Exaltation, either disappearing or fading to vestigial changes that give no positive or negative effects. Positive mutations are converted to experience for the character to buy Charms, raise Essence or otherwise advance his character. Negative mutations are converted to a deficit that must be paid off with current or future experience (see "Inheritance" on p. 127, for experience values for mutations). In addition to this pool of experience, the God-Blooded gains all the extra Favored Abilities (beyond his initial two), all the appropriate Caste/Auspicious Abilities, the Personal and Peripheral Essence pools of a full Exalt, and half the starting Charms of an Exalt of his type. If the character's permanent Essence is not at least 2, it is raised to that rating. Additional Charms can be purchased with experience gained from cashing in mutations. God-Blooded who have learned sorcery or necromancy keep this knowledge when they become full Exalted and can learn any higher levels of magic allowed to their Exalt type. Finally, if he did not already possess the Great Curse through mutation, the former Half-Caste is now subject to it in the same manner as any other Exalt of his type.

It is completely unheard of for a Half-Caste to Exalt as a different type of Chosen than his parent. Caste may differ, but the marks of destiny in the character's blood has pledged her to the service of the Unconquered Sun, Luna, the Maidens or the Yozis even before she was born, and this cannot be changed.

God-Bloods who Exalt are often a bit odd. If they had strangely colored eyes, hair or other minor physical mutations, these oddities remain. Greater mutations typically vanish, though some small artifacts of these changes might remain. For example, a Half-Caste Lunar who possessed wings might manifest feathers on her arms as a Tell. A Half-Caste Solar with Perfect Healing Factor might discover that even the worst wounds do not scar after he Exalts. Mental mutations degrade into strange but rarely debilitating quirks. Storytellers are free to disallow any minor effects that seem too strange or would logically have strong mechanical effects.

Demon-Blooded

Demons do not mate and reproduce with each other sexually. Exact methods vary from demon to demon, but sex is merely a diversion for most. Even those demons who enjoy sex often kill their lovers with violent and depraved acts of pleasure. Furthermore, powerful demons can kill lovers through their very nature. Demons of the Third Circle are such demons, whose destructive nature destroys most mortals with whom they mate. These demons can often prevent this by exercising restraint, but few bother unless the creation of a Demon-Blooded child is their goal. Exalts, certain powerful beasts and other God-Bloods can generally survive such matings regardless.

Not all demon matings occur with the demon instigating them, however. Since the First Age, sorcerers have been summoning demons for sexual encounters, sometimes for the express purpose of producing Demon-Blooded offspring.

The exact method of mating with a demon varies as widely as the nature of demons themselves. Some mate as humans do, using intimate contact and similarly formed organs. Others enter their lover's dreams to leave them pregnant when they awake. Still others, such as the neomah, even use their demonic powers to shape and craft children as a sculptor works metal or stone.

Demonic births are exceptionally dangerous to mortals. Add one to the difficulty of the roll for mortal human and animal mothers to survive childbirth. Even mothers who survive sometimes suffer mental trauma as a result of the hellish visions that often plague such births. Make a (Stamina + Integrity) roll with a difficulty of 2 for mortal mothers of Demon-Bloods. Failure results in the mother losing a point of permanent Willpower and suffering from nightmarish waking dreams for the rest of her life.

Ghost-Blooded

It is generally against the natural order that death begets life. Endings swell the Underworld, not beginnings. That said, the dead can and do have children with mortals. There are simply some conditions on these births.

Only ghosts with the proper expertise and mastery over their forms can impregnate a mortal woman. The ghost must know the Fertile Soul Endowment Charm (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. V—The Roll of**

Glorious Divinity II, p. 135) to accomplish this act. This Charm can be used by male or female ghosts, but the mother must be mortal. As with Demon-Blooded, the difficulty to survive childbirth increases by one, but the possible psychological effects are absent. Mothers of Ghost-Bloods who die in childbirth almost always become ghosts themselves.

Half-Caste

Unlike the Dragon-Blooded, Celestial Exalted do not normally pass along their power to their children. Additional power, either internal or external must be present to birth a Half-Caste. Celestial Exalted with a permanent Essence of 4 or greater possess such power, and their children are born Half-Caste. Exalted who live as gods and receive the worship of mortals (a Cult Background of 3+ or Followers Background of 3+ defined as devoted worshipers) reduce this Essence requirement by one. Those Exalted who live for at least a month prior to conception in an uncapped demesne also reduce the requirement by one, and these effects stack. Actual breeding and pregnancy occurs normally as with mortals.

Lunars of any Essence rating can produce beastmen as an innate power by mating with an animal or human in the Bordermarches or deeper in the Wyld. These births follow natural limitations, so a hawk cannot produce an egg large enough to give birth to a God-Blooded or beastman. Once a Lunar reaches a permanent Essence of 4 or greater, she can produce beastmen outside of the presence of Wyld energies, and she can also give birth to Lunar Half-Castes. Whether a child is beastman or a Half-Caste is a product of the Lunar's desires, conscious or otherwise. Lunar Half-Castes are also more likely to develop animal-like mutations than their other Half-Caste cousins. Any Exalt can occasionally produce beastmen with cross-species mating if his permanent Essence is 5 or greater. This requires a successful Essence roll with difficulty 3, however, and the roll is not optional.

Most Half-Caste births follow normal rules, with the exception of Abyssal Half-Castes, Infernal Half-Castes and beastmen. Beastmen's strange Wyld-changed nature is dangerous to mortal women, and Abyssal Half-Castes can literally suck the life out their mothers as they are born. Infernal Half-Castes use the same rules for childbirth as demons. The difficulty of a mortal woman surviving giving birth to either a beastman or an Abyssal Half-Caste is 3. In the rare case of beastmen litters, this difficulty increases to 4. More information on beastmen can be found in **Exalted**, pages 282–283, and **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld**, pages 157–160.

Fae-Blooded

When a raksha assumes the form of a mortal, he takes on all aspects of that form. It is because of this that all Fair Folk may mate with mortals to produce Fae-Blooded offspring. There is no minimum Essence required to conceive such a child.

The erratic and mercurial nature of the Fair Folk means that far more sire than bear Fae-Blooded children. Their Wyld-fueled fertility does have its benefits, though. A mortal mother adds her child's Inheritance rating to all attempts to resist Wyld mutation and other effects of Wyld exposure while she is carrying a Fae-Blooded child.

Terrestrial Half-Castes?

Half-Castes are the children of Celestial Exalted and those newer creations of the Neverborn and Yozis that make use of the stolen Solar Exaltations. The Terrestrial Exalted do not give birth to Half-Castes regardless of their Essence. Instead, they pass their powers down to their children as a they always have, through their elementally charged blood. Not all the children of the Dragon-Blooded Exalt, but those who do become full Terrestrials and not weaker half-breeds.

The reason for the lack of Terrestrial Half-Castes is twofold. The first is setting related. The Dragon-Blooded were designed to pass their powers along through their offspring. The "design flaw" in Celestials that allows the mutations and diluted blood of the Half-Castes is absent from their bloodline and has been replaced with true Exalted heritage. The second reason for the absence of Half-Caste Dragon-Blooded is story related. If powerful Terrestrials could birth Half-Castes, then logically the powerful families of the Realm would be filled with these half-breeds. The social conflict between the Terrestrial Exalted and their mundane siblings would be lessened if so many non-Exalted were still noticeably supernatural.

This is not the say that Storytellers cannot add Terrestrial Half-Castes to their series if they wish. The rules for God-Blooded can be used without alteration to craft Half-Caste children of the Dragon-Blooded. It is recommended however that Storytellers seriously consider the ramifications of adding half-blooded supernaturally charged children to the Great Houses of the Realm. Their presence would alter the political and social dynamic of the Scarlet Dynasty, and the echoes of these changes would affect the rest of Creation. They should not be introduced into an **Exalted** game lightly.

Blood Primacy

At times, different magical beings mate not with mortals, but each other to produce God-Blooded offspring. In such cases, the child favors one parent over the other based on age-old rules of fate and parental status. The God-Blood favors the parent with the highest permanent Essence rating. In the case of a tie, the following hierarchy is used (ranked from highest to lowest):

Solar/Abyssal/Infernal
Lunar/Sidereal
Terrestrial/God/Demon
Fair Folk/Elemental
Ghost

If there is still a tie, such as when an Infernal and a Solar of the same Essence mate, then the Storyteller should consider the exact circumstances of the conception. If the Solar/Infernal mating occurred in Malfeas, for example, the child should favor his Infernal parent. Otherwise, simply roll a die for odd or even, or flip a coin.

Note that Terrestrial Exalted do not birth Half-Castes as their Celestial cousins do. If the Terrestrial's lineage in such a mating is dominant, then the child is born as any other Terrestrial child with one important difference—Terrestrial matings with other supernatural beings nearly always results in the child Exalting as a Dragon-Blood. Many of these children come to their powers early, sometimes too early for them to properly understand and manage them.

Storytellers who wish for a bit more variety in such unions might consider allowing the player of a God-Blood to select mutations that are normally available to only the God-Blooded of the non-dominant parent. Do so carefully, though, since mixing certain specialized mutations can result in mechanically unbalanced characters.

What's more, the energies protect the woman during the birth. This means that mortal mothers only die in childbirth through a botch of the normal (Stamina + Resistance) roll.

Endowment

Birth is the most common way a God-Blood is created, but it is not the only way. Some gods and demons can use various Charms and powers to "adopt" a mortal. This adoption endows the mortal with a portion of the magical being's Essence and transforms him into a God-Blood of a type dependent on the magical being who granted the power. (Eclipse Caste Solars or Moonshadow Caste Abyssals who learn Charms that allow for supernatural endowment can also create Half-Castes in this manner, though other Exalted cannot.)

The mortal who receives this Endowment is treated as a normal God-Blood. He receives an Inheritance Background equal to one-half the Essence rating of his adopting parent, rounded down. For example, if the Essence 6 demon Lucien, the Guardian of Sleep (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. V—The Roll of Glorious Divinity II**, pp. 64-65), endows a mortal agent with some of his power, the mortal transforms into a Demon-Blood with an Inheritance rating of 3. Magical beings with a permanent Essence of 1 cannot transfer power to mortals, as they are simply too weak to do so.

Despite the possibility of creating God-Blooded in this way, few magical beings do so. First, naturally born God-Bloods grow up with their powers and supernatural nature. They are often trained and conditioned to serve their parents for years. Also, most of these children feel the strong bonds of family that usually serve to keep them from betraying or displeasing their parents. Endowed God-Blooded have none of these advantages. The transformation from mortal to God-Blooded might drive them mad or drive a wedge between them and their "parents." They are generally too much of an unknown commodity.

There is one other reason most demons and gods avoid creating God-Blooded in this fashion: cost. Using Charms to endow this level of permanent power costs Essence, and few gods or demons squander their energies—especially when they can engage in a few moments of sex to achieve the same effect.

That said, sometimes demons and gods elevate trusted servants or useful pawns to the level of God-Blooded. These individuals are almost always heroic mortals already, as these magical beings see no reason to work with substandard materials. Generally, only the most devoted mortals are chosen for this honor. Their selection doesn't guarantee loyalty and devoted service onto death, but it does go a long way to suggest it.

Ascension

In addition to endowing a mortal with powers to make them God-Blooded, some beings can elevate God-Blooded to the status of full supernatural beings. Many call his process ascension, though it sometimes goes by less flattering names depending on context. The God-Blood must have an Essence rating of at least 3 to be eligible for ascension. God-Bloods with lower Essence ratings are too bound to their mortal flesh to transcend it. The exact effects of such supernatural endowments are as follows:

God-Blooded: God-Blooded who ascend become little gods or elementals of similar type to their parents. Some of these God-Bloods might become gods of slightly different concepts or phenomena depending on their own actions and destiny. For example, a daughter of a forest god who felt a special kinship with certain forest animals might become an animal spirit instead of a lesser forest god.

Demon-Blooded: Demon-Blooded promoted into the Descending Hierarchy of demonkind become demons of the First Circle, and serfs besides. Their stay at this level of service might not be long in the case of the children of very powerful demons, but they begin in the First Circle and must prove themselves loyal denizens of Malfeas and servants of the Yozis before they can expect to be granted true citizenship.

Ghost-Blooded: Ghost-Blooded who ascend die instantly. Moments later, they are reborn as full ghosts. They are no longer material creatures and have all the powers and limitations of ghosts.

Half-Castes: Half-Castes endowed with addition power do not automatically Exalt. Exaltation is a gift for the worthy, and mere Charms cannot cause it to occur. If an Exalt believes in a Half-Caste enough to grant him additional power, however, then the gods look on this as a sort of "letter of recommendation." As a result, they might grant additional rights or powers. Exaltation is even a possible reward to those with the greatest destiny and most worth, but that decision is out of even the gods' hands.

Fae-Blooded: Fae-Bloods do not ascend. They are forever half-mortal and half-Fair Folk. Some Fair Folk do grant additional powers to favored children in place of ascension, though.

Rules on converting a God-Blood to a full magical being are found later in the chapter (see p. 115), while rules on Exalting a Half-Caste appear on page 108. Storytellers are never required to ascend or Exalt a God-Blooded character, and such achievement should never be easy. A whole series could be crafted around a group of God-Bloods questing for ascension so that they might join their magical parents.

God-Blooded Character Creation

This section details the steps to create God-Blooded characters in **Exalted**. In essence, creating a God-Blood is much like creating a heroic mortal, and many of the rules are the same. The main differences are in the large number of bonus points God-Bloods gain as a result of their supernatural blood and the ability to spend these points on a number of mutations.

Step One: Character Concept

Choosing a concept for a God-Blood is much the same as doing so for an Exalted or heroic mortal. Consider the character's past. Since God-Blooded gain their power and half-supernatural status from their parents, the character's family is very important. Who were his parents? Where did he grow up? What were the circumstances surrounding his birth—a lustful affair, marriage, rape or something else? Who was his supernatural parent and his mortal one? Does he have any siblings? Full or half? How does he get along with his parents, particularly his supernatural one? How does he feel about supernatural beings and events? Is he even aware of his parentage and God-Blooded nature?

Heritage

God-Blooded do not fall into castes like Exalts. Instead, they come from one of five heritages depending on the nature of the supernatural beings from whom they descend. The five heritages are: God-Blooded (gods and elementals), Demon-Blooded (demons), Ghost-Blooded (ghosts), Half-Caste (Exalted) and Fae-Blooded (Fair Folk). Note that God-Blooded is also the generic term for all of these heritages, mostly because the children of the gods and elementals are by far the most numerous of these half-blooded beings. These five heritages are all roughly the same in power level with the strength of the God-Blood having more to do with the power and position of her supernatural sire.

Inheritance

Backgrounds are usually covered under Step Four: Advantages, but there is one exception: Inheritance. Inheritance represents God-Blooded power and potential due to breeding. Each dot in Inheritance provides bonus points, making it more powerful and not balanced with other Backgrounds. It is better to look at Inheritance as a benchmark to establish the power level of a group of God-Blooded. Storytellers should assign a consistent Inheritance rating to all God-Blooded characters to be used in character creation. They should select this rating based on the intended power level of their series and to make God-Blooded characters better match any non-God-Blooded characters. See pages 127-129 for more information on the Inheritance Background and its effects.

Motivation

God-Blooded characters select a Motivation as normal. Many God-Blooded who serve their parents learn to conceal their true selves beneath a veneer of submission, filial piety and loyalty. Underneath this mask, they might be conniving schemers, zealots, idealists or anything else. They might have ultimate goals that go against the desires of their parent.

Step Two: Choosing Attributes

God-Blooded are generally less powerful than Exalted, but they are still exceptional. Their starting Attributes are similar to heroic mortals, though slightly more potent. God-Blooded receive six dots for their primary Attributes, five for their secondary and three for their tertiary. Half-Caste characters gain a further Attribute bonus, as described under their description later in the chapter.

Step Three: Choosing Abilities

God-Blooded are not the font of skill and expertise that Exalted are, but they can reach heights of expertise comparable with heroic mortals. God-Blooded characters select one Favored Ability. They also receive 25 dots to distribute among Abilities. No ability can be higher than their Favored Ability. They purchase specialties as normal. As with Exalted, no Ability can be raised above three dots at character creation without the use of bonus points. Given the large number of bonus points God-Blooded receive from Inheritance, this is not much of a limitation, and many God-Blooded exhibit truly exceptional levels of skill in multiple areas.

Step Four: Advantages

Backgrounds

God-Blooded characters receive six dots in Backgrounds. These may be selected from the Backgrounds in the **Exalted** core book and from the new Background Patron, found later in the chapter. God-Blooded of certain ancestry can also, at the Storyteller's discretion, select Backgrounds from other **Exalted** sourcebooks. For example, an Abyssal Half-Caste may possess Backgrounds from **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Abyssals.**

Mutations

By spending bonus points, players can select various mutations for their God-Blooded characters that reflect how their supernatural parentage has changed them. Mutations are detailed later in the chapter and come in both positive and negative types. Positive mutations cost bonus points and give various advantages. Negative mutations are harmful or limiting, but they give additional bonus points to spend.

Mutations are at the core of the God-Blooded's power. Care and consideration should be taken in selecting them since they tell much about how a God-Blood appears and how he interacts with the world. Mutations can turn a God-Blood into a barely human monster or a god-like being of wonder. They are fundamental changes to the body, mind and even the very soul of God-Blooded characters and should be not taken lightly.

If the Storyteller is using the optional rules for Lineage (see p. 130), then mutations marked "Inherited" should also be selected at this time.

Charms

In addition to mutations, God-Blooded characters can select most Charms available to their magical parents. These Charms must be purchased with bonus points at character creation. Characters receive no free Charms. There are a few limitations to Charm selection. First, the Ox-Body Technique cannot be selected to give extra -0 health levels. God-Blooded can learn supernatural martial arts of various styles, but they can only learn Terrestrial styles as skilled mortals can. They learn these styles as magical beings do, however.

Buying Charms at character creation costs seven bonus points each. All prerequisites must be met. Also, God-Blooded cannot develop Combos, so they cannot activate more than one Charm at a time. Specific Charm guidelines for the various heritages are as follows:

God-Blooded: The children of gods and elementals learn spirit Charms like their parents. They cannot learn Hurry Home as gods do, but they can learn a lesser version that costs permanent instead of temporary Willpower. Charms that involve traits God-Blooded do not possess can be learned, but they work only if some outside force makes the Charm relevant. For example, God-Blooded have no normal use of Materialize. Yet, a God-Blood who possesses this Charm could use it to become material if she were somehow rendered immaterial. Likewise, God-Blooded are unable to use Possession unless they are somehow made immaterial.

Storytellers should feel free to ban or restrict Charms based on character concept. The son of a fire elemental will not generally learn how to control water, nor will the daughter of a god of war typically be able to create feelings of peace and tranquility. Nevertheless, Storytellers should consider allowing such concepts occasionally. Real-world mythology is full of stories of children of various gods and monsters developing abilities far different from their parents.

All Charms are learned exactly as they are taught. This means that God-Blooded might know different versions of the same Charm and may learn multiple versions of the same Charm. Each of these variant Charms is treated as a separate Charm for the purposes of buying them at character creation with bonus points or later with experience.

Demon-Blooded: The children of demons follow the same rules of Charm selection as God-Blooded. Storytellers should take into account the powers and demeanor of the demonic parent when allowing or disallowing certain Charms. The daughter of a blood-ape is likely to have simple, direct, violent Charms. The son

of a neomah is more likely to have Charms that seduce and beguile. More information on Demon-Blooded can be found in **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals**, pages 57-64.

Ghost-Blooded: Children of ghosts can learn Arcanoi just as their parents, but they suffer the same limitations as other God-Blooded. For example, Ghost-Bloods cannot usually reshape their flesh. Certain mutations can mimic these effects to some degree, however, such as God Body (see p. 135).

Half-Caste: The children of the Chosen can learn nearly any of the Charms of their parents as long as they meet the minimums for each Charm. There are a few exceptions. Half-Castes cannot learn perfect defenses or Charms that grant a persistent scene-long defense. Sidereal Half-Castes can learn any Sidereal Charms other than Sidereal martial arts, but many Charms with the Maiden keyword are academic exercises and cannot be used except in the rarest of circumstances. Lunars Half-Castes do not possess their Exalted sire's ability to shapechange naturally, but they can learn the Deadly Beastman Transformation and Finding the Spirit's Shape. They are limited to no more than two alternative forms when selecting these Charms. No Half-Caste can learn Solar Circle Sorcery or Void Circle Necromancy. As with all God-Blooded, Storytellers should feel free to limit any Charms they feel are inappropriate for their games.

Fae-Blooded: Fae-Blooded children can learn the Charms of the Fair Folk. Given the alien nature of the Fair Folk, however, many Charms are not appropriate for use with any being whose form is as static and mortal as a God-Blood's. Furthermore, Fae-Blooded cannot learn the more advanced uses of Glamour and can create only short-term effects that last no more than a scene. Furthermore, the minimums for all Glamour-related Charms increase by one dot to reflect thinner blood and connection to the Wyld. Generally, it is easier to mimic Wyld-fueled madness and physical changes with mutations, and Storytellers should feel free to limit Charms they feel don't fit within their **Exalted** games.

Spells

God-Blooded can learn magic assuming they meet the minimum requirements. God-Blooded, non-Abyssal Half-Castes and Demon-Blooded can learn Terrestrial Circle sorcery. Abyssal Half-Castes and Ghost-Blooded can learn Shadowland Necromancy. Fae-Blooded are exceptions to this, as their nature generally prevents them from learning sorcery. Instead they sometimes learn various Fair Folk Charms that mimic a variety of magical effects. Higher levels of sorcery lie beyond the

normal purview of God-Blooded. Storytellers who wish to allow a God-Blood to learn higher levels of sorcery and necromancy should raise the minimums for learning by at least one dot to reflect the difficulty a half-breed supernatural has mastering such forces. No God-Blooded, not even Solar or Abyssal Half-Castes, can learn Solar Circle Sorcery or Void Circle Necromancy.

Also, to reflect the general difficulty God-Blooded have in mastering such powerful magic, the cost of sorcery Charms is 10 bonus points (instead of the usual seven for other Charms).

Virtues

God-Blooded characters receive the same Virtue allotment as Exalts, one free dot and five dots to distribute. With the exception of those Half-Castes who suffer from the Great Curse mutation, God-Blooded do not suffer from the Great Curse and need not concern themselves with Virtue Flaws and Limit Breaks.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

God-Blooded calculate their health levels and Willpower the same as heroic mortals (see **Exalted**, p. 81). If the Storyteller is using Merits and Flaws, these can also be selected at this time.

Essence

God-Blooded are not the natural fonts of Essence their parents are. Their permanent Essence begins at 1, though this can be raised during character creation with bonus points. No God-Blooded can begin play with an Essence greater than 3, as their mortal natures limit them in this regard. In truth, few God-Blooded ever rise beyond that level in their entire lives, though players' characters are exceptional and often buck such trends. To reflect this difficulty in transcending their human limitations, the cost to raise Essence from 2 to 3 is 15 bonus points, and all experience costs to raise Essence to 3 or above for God-Blooded are increased by half-again the normal cost. Storytellers should feel free to cap Essence for God-Blooded at 3 if they wish or put special requirements on advancement such as quests or endowment from powerful magical beings.

Essence pools for God-Blooded are calculated in a similar way as their magical parents. Their Essence pools are noticeably smaller than their parents, though they are still potent. In addition, Half-Castes possess no Personal Essence pool, but only possess a Peripheral Essence pool. God-Blooded are also subject to the same limitations on regaining Essence as their parent. Thus, a Ghost-Blood cannot regain Essence motes naturally in Creation unless within a shadowland, and Solar Half-Caste who travels to the Underworld will find herself unable to regenerate Essence normally.

Bonus Points

As with heroic mortals, God-Blooded receive 21 bonus points at this stage. This is in addition to bonus points granted by Inheritance and is meant to generally reflect life experience, special training and other aspects of a character not directly related to his supernatural nature. These points may be spent on mutations or other powers, but Storytellers can place limitations on doing so if they wish.

The Spark of Life

As with any character, consider the important questions that make a God-Blooded character more than a mere collection of traits. What does she look like? What is her personality like? Who are her friends? Her enemies? How did she discover her heritage, and how does she feel about it? What is her relationship with her supernatural parent, and how does it affect other aspects of her life? Why does she do what she does?

God-Blooded characters should be something more magical that normal heroic mortals. They should not, however, just be "**Exalted Lite!**—Now with less Essence and fewer Charms." Their parents are a diverse and exotic group, and the exotic half-bloods they spawn should be equally as wondrous, even if they are not as powerful. Players should consider what exactly makes their God-Blooded characters different from other characters and seek to reflect that both in their character's traits and how they roleplay.

Intimacies

Like Exalted and heroic mortals, God-Blooded possess Intimacies. They can have no more starting Intimacies than their Compassion and change them according to their Conviction. (For more details on Intimacies in general, see **Exalted**, pp. 76 and 90.)

These Intimacies can be anything the player desires, but certain Intimacies are worth discussing. These are Intimacies that are either very common among God-Blooded or take on a more complex meaning. They fall into two wide categories: ones that hint at the character's mortal nature and those that speak to his magical heritage.

Intimacies that deal with a God-Blood's mortal nature are things such as love for a mortal parent, loyalty to a mortal half-sibling or a promise made to a childhood sweetheart. They anchor the God-Blooded to the mundane world. The God-Blooded's magical parents often view such Intimacies as weaknesses that hold their children back, but many God-Blooded are sustained by their devotion to these people, places and ideals.

Conversely, Intimacies that deal with the God-Blood's magical nature, such as devotion to a su-

pernatural sire, a driving desire to ascend or even a deep hatred of his heritage, draw the character further into the world of magical beings. Mortals view such goals as meddling in affairs best left alone or as an unhealthy interest in the supernatural. Yet, many God-Bloods have been driven to great deeds while remaining true to such Intimacies.

The Intimacies a player selects for his character say a lot about who the character is. In particular, they suggest which side of his parentage the character favors or whether he tries to always strike a delicate balance between mortal and magical.

Experience Costs and Advancement

Generally, God-Blooded learn and grow with experience as normal for the beings from whom they descend. There are a few exceptions. The increased cost for raising Essence to 3 or greater has been noted. In addition, new Charms or spells cost 12 experience points regardless of type. Training times are as normal for the beings from whom they descend, except for Essence, which is (rating x 1.5) months. Learning sorcery after character creation costs 25 experience points and is limited to Terrestrial Circle Sorcery or Shadowlands Circle Necromancy without Storyteller approval.

In addition to the increased costs, raising Essence beyond 3 often has special complications for God-Blooded. Most simply cannot surpass this level, and those who do often find they must undergo a transformation that makes them something more supernatural than mortal. For example, a Ghost-Blood who raises her Essence to 4 might find the increase in power kills her and turns her into a full ghost. A God-Blood might transcend and become a full god. In these cases, many mutations will naturally be lost and should be converted into experience to purchase similar Charms available to the type of creature the character is now. (See "Inheritance," p. 127, for experience values of various mutations.) The loss of negative mutations in this manner will create a similar experience deficit to be paid off with current or future experience. These changes should not be simply a matter of paying the experience and rearranging some numbers—they represent a fundamental and lasting change in the very nature of the God-Blood.

God-Blooded Character Creation Summary

Step One: Character Concept

Record Inheritance.

Choose character concept, heritage and Motivation

Step Two: Select Attributes

Note that all Attributes start with one dot for free.

Prioritize the three Attribute Categories: Physical, Social and Mental (6/5/3)

Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina

Choose Social Attributes: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance

Choose Mental Attributes: Perception, Intelligence, Wits

Step Three: Select Abilities

Select one Favored Ability.

Choose Abilities (25—No Ability can be higher than the character's Favored Ability, though it may be equal; no Ability can exceed 3 without spending bonus points.)

Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Backgrounds (6—none may be higher than 3 without spending bonus points) and Virtues (5—none may be higher than 4 without spending bonus points).

Selected positive and negative mutations: Spend bonus points provided by Inheritance to purchase positive mutations. Characters may also select negative mutations for additional bonus points to be spent here or in Step Seven. If the optional rules for Lineage (see p. 130) are used, players should select those mutations marked "Inherited" at this time.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Essence (1), Willpower (sum of the two highest Virtues—may not start higher than 8 unless at least two Virtues are 4 or higher) and health levels (7, plus any gained from mutations or Charms). Characters record their Essence pool based on their Heritage: ([Essence x 5] + [Willpower x 2] + [Sum of Virtues]) for God-Blooded, Ghost-Blooded and Demon-Blooded; ([Essence x 4] + Willpower + [Sum of Virtues]) for Half-Castes; and (Essence x 8) for Fae-Blooded.

Bonus Points

Bonus points (21) may be spent at any time during character creation.

Bonus Point Costs

Trait	Cost
Attribute	4
Ability	2 (1 for Favored Ability)
Background	1 (2 if the Background is being raised above 3)
Specialty	1 (2 per 1 if Favored Ability)
Virtue	5
Willpower	3
Essence	12 for Rating 2, 15 for 3 or Greater
Charm	7 (10 for sorcery or necromancy Charms)
Spell	10

Positive Mutation Costs

Type of Mutation	Bonus Point Cost	Experience Point Cost
Pox	1	3
Affliction	2	6
Blight	4	12
Abomination	6	18

Negative Mutation Bonuses

Type of Mutation	Bonus Point Cost	Experience Point Cost
Deficiency	1	3
Debility	2	6
Deformity	4	12

God-Blooded

It is to the children of the gods and elementals that scholars most often refer when they speak of half-breed children with magic in their blood. These are the true God-Blooded, and they are easily the most common of their type. Their heritage has become a catchall term for all children birthed from the mating of a mortal and a supernatural being. In areas where a large number of divinities interact on a regular basis with mortals, such as Great Forks, one person in 50 claims some portion of divine blood. This number drops to one in 1,000 elsewhere, but even so, God-Bloods are some of the most commonly encountered supernatural beings. The only exception to this is on the Blessed Isle, where adherence to the Immaculate faith keeps many from being born there.

The amount of God-Blooded in an area is directly proportional to local attitudes toward gods. Those who hold to the Immaculate Order's teachings avoid mating with gods and hide or send away those children they birth. In areas heavily involved with the worship of the gods and elementals, such children are common and often hailed as good omens and future heroes. Some mortals even devote considerable time and resources to persuading gods to lie with them. Making expensive offerings at temples, playing naked in areas where gods are known to frequent and other blatant tactics are often employed. Unfortunately for some hapless mortals, perfectly innocent offerings and behaviors are sometimes mistaken for invitations (for those who feel such invitations are necessary). This only further increases the number of God-Blooded in such areas.

The attitudes of the gods themselves also influence these numbers. Long ago, it was considered an embarrassment for a god to mate with mortals. Now, in the Age of Sorrows, this stigma has relaxed, and many gods now consider mating with mortals, a practice commonly referred to as Sunset Dalliances, not only to be acceptable, but also their right as superior beings. Among elementals, these affairs are even more common, since they already dwell among the mortals with whom they dally.

There are no hard-and-fast reasons a god produces a child with a mortal. Some do so out of love, while others are in it purely for the pleasure of the act itself. Still others purposefully have such children to breed their own powerful servants and champions. Whatever the reason, God-Blooded are generally considered too valuable to discard or neglect. They are valuable tools, messengers, priests and warriors. That said, even gods sometimes leave their seed where they did not intend, and some God-Bloods grow up without their divine parents knowing of their existence. Some of these children seek their parents out later in life, demanding recognition

or repayment for neglect. A few such God-Blooded even find their way into the service or other gods and magical beings, hoping for appreciation their divine parents never gave them.

Technically, there are rules in the Celestial Bureaucracy against spawning God-Blooded, at least without prior approval and under certain conditions. The laws that govern this matter are very old, very strict and very often ignored. Most gods, if questioned about lying with mortals and conceiving half-blooded godlings, simply bribe the proper officials. That said, a god trying to breed his own personal army of supernaturally empowered children will usually be shut down or face prohibitive bribes, fines and penalties. Such tactics are the province of the more rebellious or very powerful gods, ones who either do not care or can afford the extra attention. Most gods are content with, at most, a handful of God-Blooded offspring, and the Celestial Bureaucracy is more than happy to look the other way for the right price.

Most God-Blooded find themselves in the service of their divine parents. The nature and method of this service varies widely. Some God-Blooded are little more than slaves, kept in check by threats, blackmail and other dastardly tactics. Others are spoiled children who have few duties and serve willingly. Most fall somewhere in between these two extremes. Some God-Bloods serve without even knowing, manipulated from afar to undertake quests and errands while ignorant of how these actions serve their parents.

Most gods don't really understand their children. In this, they share a kinship with many mortals, but with an important distinction. Mortal parents tend to not understand their children because of generational gaps, ideological differences and an inability to remember what it was like to be their age. Gods do not understand their half-mortal offspring because they are not mortal and are unable to truly comprehend certain realities of their children's lives. They tend to forget that mortals, especially children, need rest, food and shelter. They do not understand the need for structure and emotional stability in a child's life. Gods who seek to be sole parent to their child often find themselves terribly vexed by things as simple as changing or feeding a baby.

After attempting this once or even hearing another god talk about trying it, the majority of gods decide to leave their children in the care of their mortal parents or other humans. Some children are even abandoned entirely, left to survive or perish according to fate. Of course, dad will show up years later with gifts and a story about how it was necessary to prepare the child for a great destiny, but such treatment is almost always more about the god's failings than his child's "need" to starve or scrape by throughout his early years. Some God-Blooded children learn to hate their parents after such treatment, though others embrace their absentee parents and strive to please them.

As a result, many factors determine what a child of the gods becomes. Many serve faithfully as Divine Shadows of their parents, doing whatever is required and asked of them. Others wander aimlessly, looking for a place to fit in. Some even come into the employ of Exalts, demons or other gods in an effort to distance themselves from their families. Some are heroes, some are villains, and some are merely spectators to greater affairs, but all are seeking a way to justify their mixed nature with the world around them.

Heritage Power: God-Bloods may attune their senses to the spirit world around them. For the cost of three motes of Essence or one Willpower, the character can perceive all sanctum entrances and immaterial spirits around her for one scene. She enhances her normal senses to achieve this effect, so her perception is limited by the range of her mortal senses. In addition to this effect, God-Blooded can increase their own reserves of Essence through force of will alone. By spending one temporary Willpower, they can regain (highest Virtue x 2) motes of Essence. This power may be used only once per scene.

Associations: Determined by parentage. Children of elementals are associated with the element of their parent, as well as the season, color and direction. The children of gods have associations based on their parent as determined by the Storyteller. The son of a god of a particular river would feel a connection to that river, but also likely with other rivers, water in general, the color blue and freshwater fish.

Sobriquets: Divine Shadows, God-Kin, Godlings, Half-Spirits, Harvest of Sighs, Sunset Dalliances

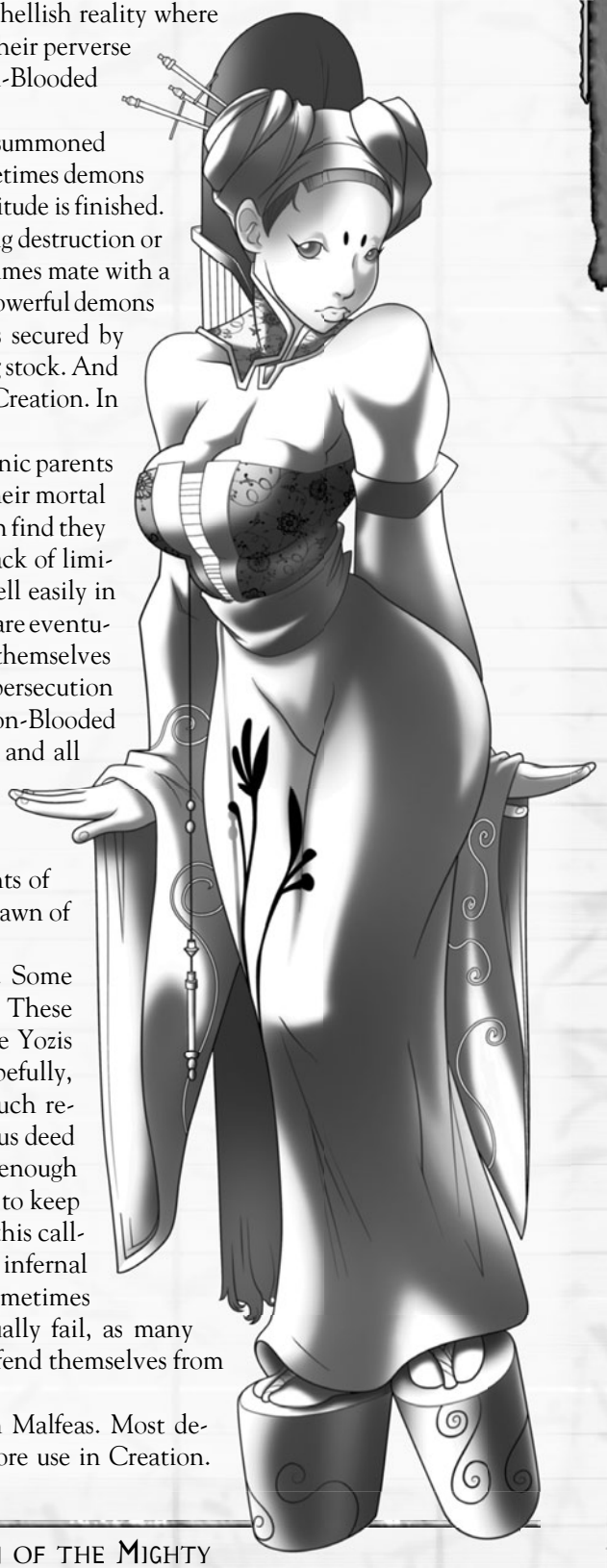
Concepts: divine champion, honor guard for the gods, loyal priestess, messenger of the gods, scribe for the spirits, wandering hero

Essence Pool: (Essence x 5) + (Willpower x 2) + (Sum of Virtues)

Heed my words well, for I am my voice of my mother. Turn away from your blasphemies and restore the shrine you have neglected. Observe the rites and offer your best as sacrifice. Otherwise, you will suffer so deeply your descendants will be born weeping.

Demon-Blooded

Since the Primordials became the Yozis and were imprisoned within Malfeas, they have plotted against Creation. Their spawn, the demons, work to free them and visit suffering and anguish on mortals so that none will ever forget they once ruled all and plan to do so again. The demons and their Yozi masters are impossibly arrogant, cruel and possess twisted sensibilities no human can fully comprehend. They seek nothing less than the rule of Creation, the subjugation of humanity, the fall of the gods and the death of the Chosen. They wish to strip away everything gentle and fine and replace it with a hellish reality where sadism is high art and flesh is a canvas for the demons to work their perverse arts upon. It is into this great extended family that the Demon-Blooded are born.



Demons rarely escape Malfeas on their own. Usually, they are summoned by sorcerers or beckoned by thaumaturgical rituals. Even so, sometimes demons evade their bindings or are not properly banished once their servitude is finished. These demons can sometimes wander Creation for years, avoiding destruction or banishment. Left to their own devices, these demons will sometimes mate with a mortal through rape, seduction or even warped mutual interest. Powerful demons seeking half-blooded children might even have comely slaves secured by lesser demons or cults and brought to Malfeas to provide breeding stock. And finally, many a sorcerer has lain with a demon he summoned to Creation. In fact, some sorcerers summon demons for that exact purpose.

The children of these unions are either taken by their demonic parents to be used as servants and pawns, left in the care of cultists or their mortal parents, or simply forgotten. Those who serve their parents often find they have marginal but unique status that takes advantage of the lack of limitations on their half-mortal existence. These children can dwell easily in Creation and survive in Malfeas. Some even serve faithfully and are eventually transformed into pure demons. Some Demon-Bloods pass themselves off as God-Blooded, either to hide from their sires, to escape persecution or to infiltrate various societies and organizations. A few Demon-Blooded simply wander, content to seek their own place in the world and all too aware of the hatred and prejudice their demonic nature brings. Some of these renegade children make a good living as demon-hunters and exorcists, though they are rarely welcome in the communities they aid after the job is done. The residents of Creation rightly hate and fear demons, and few will give the spawn of such creatures the benefit of the doubt.

Demon-Blooded have mixed reactions to their heritage. Some love their demonic nature and revel in the power it brings. These Children of Brass usually strive to serve their parents and the Yozis well in hopes of being transformed into full demons and, hopefully, elevated to citizens of Malfeas. Their parents often dangle such rewards just out of their reach, always asking for one more heinous deed or despicable task before these wishes are granted. Still, just enough Demon-Blooded are granted full demon status and citizenship to keep the dream alive and the children loyal. Hellspawn who reject this calling often hate and fear their demon half, fighting against its infernal influence. These Demon-Bloods hide their true nature and sometimes reject their supernatural powers altogether. Such efforts usually fail, as many Demon-Blooded find they must use their hated heritage to defend themselves from demon-hunters and demons alike.

Few Demon-Blooded are born in or spent much time in Malfeas. Most demons who spawn mortal children feel their progeny are of more use in Creation.

Likewise, sorcerers who summon demons to breed Demon-Blooded children often prefer to keep them close at hand. Some Demon-Bloods travel between Creation and the Demon City as messengers and spies, but as a rule, most prefer to avoid Malfeas. It is an alien place of misery and torment unkind to mortals, even half-mortals.

A Demon-Blood's purpose depends largely on his background. Children of demons are expected to serve their demonic sire with unquestioning loyalty and obedience, much the same way the akuma serve the Yozis. Children resulting from sorcerer-demon mating often work to assist their mortal parents and might not even know their demonic parents. Half-Damned wanderers, demon-hunters and exorcists tend to behave in ways similar to mortal heroes. This does not keep them from being generally feared and reviled, but it does remind people that nurture is as powerful a force as nature.

Many Demon-Blooded lead lives that play to their strengths. The children of the neomah often becomes seducers, spies and courtesans, while the spawn of the tomescu learn the ways of assassination and larceny. The offspring of powerful demons are often great warriors, craftsmen or courtiers. Some even overcome prejudice to become powerful and trusted members of the various royal courts of Creation, though this is not the norm. Most Demon-Bloods instead make their way in the world by a mixture of accepting and struggling against their nature. Rarely do they find peace.

The lives of the Demon-Blooded are almost never easy. Many meet messy and painful ends. Some are tortured to death by their own parents for failure or disobedience. Others are slain as abominations by crusading demon-hunters. Still others toil in slavery and submission until they eventually expire. Even those who avoid these fates face fear and hatred from mortals and derision and abuse from demons. Nonetheless, these Half-Damned children have power that eclipses mere mortals, and some use it to meet greater destinies.

Heritage Power: Demon-Blooded can attune their infernal nature to detect demons and hellish phenomena. By spending three motes of Essence or one temporary Willpower, they can perceive demons (regardless of shape or dematerialization), gates to Cecelyne, helltech and residual energies left by the powers and Charms of demons. This effect lasts until the end of the scene.

Demon-Blooded can also survive in Malfeas indefinitely. Most mortals sicken and die within seven days of entering the Demon City. The Demon-Blooded find their infernal blood sustains and protects them from these effects. By spending three motes or one temporary Willpower, the Demon-Blood can even extend this protection to any items he carries that would normally not survive Malfeas, such as steel. This effect lasts as long as he carries such items next to his flesh, though the item is unmade as normal as soon as this is not the case. While this power is in effect, the Willpower or Essence spent to activate it cannot be recovered.

Associations: Demon-Blooded resonate with the symbols of demonkind and the Yozis: the empty desert, the green sun, brass, black stone, lies and pain. On the other hand, they chafe at imprisonment and restrictions of laws and morality, preferring freedom and instinct.

Sobriquets: Children of Brass, Half-Damned, Hellspawn, Tears of Malfeas, Yozi-Kin

Concepts: demon cult leader, exorcist, heartless assassin, master torturer, procurer of forbidden delights, rogue demon-hunter

Essence Pool: (Essence x 5) + (Willpower x 2) + (sum of Virtues)

Demon-Blooded have some difficulty regenerating Essence in Creation. They regenerate temporary Essence at only half the normal rate through rest and meditation. This rate is normal in Malfeas or while traveling the wastes of Cecelyne. They also regain Essence normally in Creation when resting near places of great sin or suffering, such as slave markets and torture chambers. Demon-Blooded seeking such places for refuge and rest cannot act in a way that alleviates the sense of pain and suffering. If they do, the increased Essence regeneration is lost. To counteract this vulnerability, many demonic sires of Demon-Blooded tithe a small amount of Essence from their mortal cults to their children. Those Demon-Blooded not in the service of their parents must make do on their own.

You think to frighten me?
I see the face of Hell in every tranquil pool or polished glass.
I feel the pain and sin of ancient evils in my veins.
What can you possibly do that will teach me fear?

Ghost-Blooded

Before the Great Contagion, few ghosts wandered the Underworld. The realm of the dead was a place of emptiness and relative peace. Yet, the terrible plague that slew countless mortals changed everything. The Underworld became flooded with the restless dead, and shadowlands grew in number and size. Out of these times rose the first Ghost-Blooded. No one lives now that can say if their creation was due to purposeful experimentation or mere chance. Those few ghosts who might know the answer are silent on the matter. The Ghost-Blooded themselves do not know the truth. They simply know they were born from the unnatural mix of death and life.

From their beginnings, the Ghost-Blooded have always been useful tools for their ghostly sires. The dead appreciate their children's lack of dependency on the presence of death to maintain a material form. Their mortal blood makes Creation a more comfortable and less costly place for them to travel than ghosts, zombies and other undead. As a result, many Ghost-Bloods operate as agents, messengers, spies and merchants for the dead. For their part, many Ghoul children find that they are rejected and feared by most of Creation. Serving their dead parents gives them purpose and some manner of recognition. Even Deathlords appreciate the uses of the child of an ancient ghost, and most have such Ghost-Blooded serving them or their Abyssal servants. This utility, combined with the arrogance and lingering mortal desires of the dead, make Ghost-Blooded a relatively common sight in shadowlands.

During the reign of the Scarlet Empress, Ghost-Blooded largely existed on the outskirts of society. They were not rare, but they were rarely heard from. The folk of the Underworld recognized their uses but felt little kinship to the Half-Dead, preferring the company and service of full ghosts, while mortals rejected them as unnatural and alien. The Immaculate Order in particular condemned them as monsters who should have never been spawned. This changed with the sack of Thorns and the disappearance of the Empress. The dead began to push into Creation with renewed vigor, and they both needed and wanted the aid of their Ghost-Blooded children. Creation saw the Grave-Born as terrible threats who could infiltrate and undermine even the greatest strongholds if left unchecked. The Deathlords have begun to encourage even weaker ghosts to impregnate mortals, and many Ghost-Blooded find ample work in their service as spies, warriors, messengers and assassins for the Underworld. Some of the most powerful Ghouls rise to lead expeditions and invasions into Creation. Such war leaders often serve as part of the larger armies of the Abyssals. These Exalted feel some small kinship to these creatures neither living nor dead, gladly using them as advisors, spies and lieutenants. It is because

of these actions that Creation has begun to fear and hate the Ghouls more than ever before. The Dragon-Blooded hunt these Grave-Born agents of the Deathlords with renewed vigor and merciless enthusiasm. Not all Ghost-Blooded embrace the role of loyal Half-Dead servant of the Underworld, but even those who fight against their undead sires face prejudice and fear from mortals.

These days, most Ghost-Bloods grow up in or near shadowlands. They are surrounded by the constant conflict between life and death. They are raised under the supervision of their ghostly parents. Sometimes, they have no mortal parents remaining, as many a Grave-Born's mortal mother has already passed over to become a ghost herself. In this environment, the Ghost-Blooded grow and learn. They walk among mortals during the day and serve the dead by night. They tend Fetters and secure prayers for the dead. Many learn these tasks early and work until they eventually pass beyond as ghosts themselves. Those who serve the ancient ghost clans are the most devoted. They work as courtesans, spies and assassins and wait for the day when they will take their lives and join their ghostly parents as full citizens of the Underworld. Many shadowland-raised Ghouls attend the Abyssals, acting as anything from pleasure toys to honor guards.

Those who do not serve the Deathlords or their undead parents often strive to avoid detection. They pose as God-Blooded or hide among mortals to avoid the vengeance of the living for the suffering and death the Underworld has brought to Creation. Some fight against the undead, though they do so carefully. They know they cannot trust mortals to treat them kindly. Furthermore, most are aware that they will pass into the Underworld as ghosts themselves one day and do not wish to make too many enemies in that realm. Those who reject this wisdom and choose to make war on ghosts openly are both envied for their courage and despised for their foolhardy rebellion. Still, some Ghost-Blooded do take this path and find work as ghost-hunters and undead slayers.

These Ghost-Blooded walk in two worlds at all times. They are living and dead, cherished and despised, wanted and rejected, used and neglected. They have the power to fight against their nature but are doomed to become the ghosts they battle. They can serve faithfully while alive but are not truly accepted until after they die. They are too warm and alive to the dead and too cold and pale to the living. They are the Ghost-Blooded, and they truly belong nowhere.

Heritage Power: Ghost-Blooded may attune their senses to detect the Essence of the Underworld. By spending three motes or one temporary Willpower, they can detect dematerialized ghosts and shadowland borders. They may also replenish Essence by drinking blood as if they were ghosts (see **Exalted**, p. 316). Furthermore, all Ghost-Blooded become full ghosts automatically when they die. They lose all mutations, gain the appropriate Passion for their Virtues and five dots in Fetters. Positive mutations are converted to experience for the character to buy Charms, raise Essence or otherwise advance the character. Negative mutations are converted to a similar deficit that must be paid off with current or future experience points (see "Inheritance," p. 127, for experience point values for mutations). For more information on creating ghost character, see Chapters Four, Five and Six of **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. V—The Roll of Glorious Divinity II**.

Associations: As living beings forever surrounded by death, the Ghost-Blooded embrace the trappings of the Underworld. They favor funerary garb, grave goods and the colors of gray, black and bone white. They perfume themselves with embalming oils and flowers that grow on graves. They feel drawn to shadowlands, crypts and other places of death.

Sobriquets: Bone Children, Ghouls, Grave-Born, Half-Dead, Heirs of Dust and Ashes

Concepts: ancestral agent, courtesan of the dead, deathknight lieutenant, diplomat for the Underworld, ghost-hunter

Essence Pool: (Essence x 5) + (Willpower x 2) + (sum of Virtues)

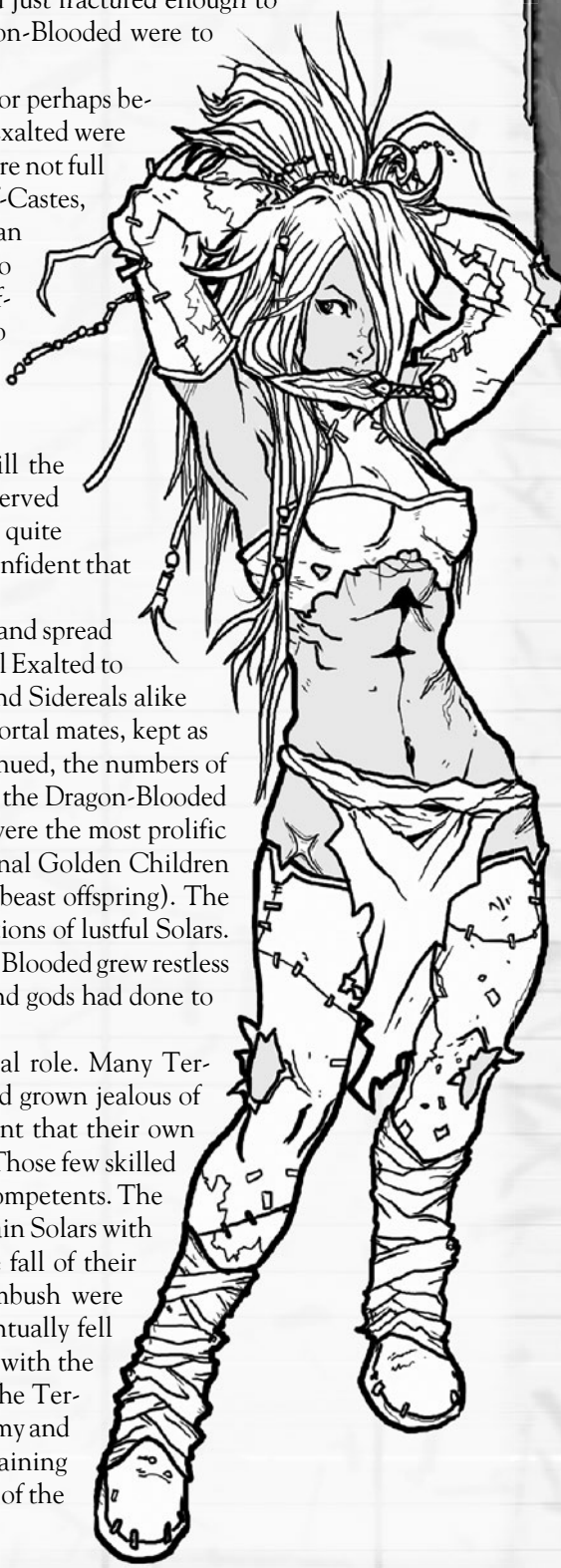
As noted, Ghost-Bloods can regain temporary Essence by drinking blood. Like their ghostly sires, they cannot respire Essence naturally outside of a shadowland, an Abyssal manse or the Underworld. Ghost-Blooded rarely have their own cults, but those who do can gain Essence from the prayers and offerings of their worshipers.

They call me Half-Dead. Grave-Born. Ghoul.
I am daughter to death and agent of your ending.
If you kill this flesh, I will rise to strike you down.
Death is not my bane. It is my birthright.
How then can you stop me?

Half-Caste

When the gods created the Exalted, they decided that the Celestial Chosen would not pass their powers directly along to their children. There were two reasons for this. First, they knew that when they finally pushed their creations to battle their Primordial masters, they would need not dynastic lineages, but the most worthy candidates with the greatest connection to destiny if they hoped to raise an army to overthrow their masters. Second, if their plan succeeded, they knew the lack of family bonds would render the Exalted just fractured enough to keep the Chosen from uniting against them. Only the weaker Dragon-Blooded were to be the exception.

Things did not go exactly as the gods planned, however. Despite, or perhaps because of, their adherence to the designs of Autochthon, the Celestial Exalted were able to pass some of their power onto their children. These offspring were not full Exalted, but they were definitely more than mere mortals. Called Half-Castes, these children were a surprise to god and Exalt alike. They presented an unknown variable in the gods' plans and the efforts of their Exalted to overthrow the Primordials. Despite concerns over the role these Half-Castes would play in the future, the gods and Exalted found they had to go ahead with their plans lest they lose their window of opportunity. So, confident the young and relatively weak Half-Castes would have little impact on their plans, they moved forward. The Exalted defeated the Primordials, and after the war was over, the gods ascended to fill the power void left by their masters' fall. During the war, the Half-Castes served as squires and assistants to their parents. Some acquitted themselves quite well, and with the vanquishing of the Primordials, many Exalted felt confident that having more of such children would only bring good things.



After the war, many Exalted decided to enjoy the spoils of victory and spread their seed. Great harems and brothels were constructed by the Celestial Exalted to house gorgeous mortals for the Chosen to mate with. Solars, Lunars and Sidereals alike took concubines and mortal consorts. Some Exalts had hundreds of mortal mates, kept as something less than wives and more than pets. As the First Age continued, the numbers of children born of these unions grew, and they slowly began to supplant the Dragon-Blooded as the core of the Old Realm's armies and bureaucracies. The Solars were the most prolific in their breeding. The Lunars were often content to bear the occasional Golden Children of their Solar Lovers (and, in rare cases, to surreptitiously breed half-beast offspring). The Sidereals kept their children sequestered lest they too draw the attentions of lustful Solars. In the shadows of this population explosion of Half-Castes, the Dragon-Blooded grew restless and plotted with the Sidereals to do to the Solars what the Exalted and gods had done to the Primordials before them.

When the Usurpation occurred, the Half-Castes played a pivotal role. Many Terrestrials seduced, deceived or recruited key Solar Half-Castes who had grown jealous of parents they would never surpass. Nepotism among the Exalted meant that their own children were often placed in positions for which they were ill suited. Those few skilled and loyal Half-Castes found themselves surrounded by traitors and incompetents. The Dragon-Blooded were able to easily overcome the loyal forces of the slain Solars with superior tactics and intelligence. Before they could recover from the fall of their children, the Solars who survived the initial Calibration dinner ambush were forced to defend themselves against hordes of Terrestrials. They eventually fell as the Primordials before them. Half-Castes who surrendered or sided with the Dragon-Blooded were next. Unwilling to risk a Half-Caste uprising, the Terrestrials mercilessly slaughtered every Half-Caste they could find—enemy and ally, infant and adult. The Solar Half-Castes were wiped out, the remaining Lunar children were forced to flee with their parents, and the children of the Sidereals vanished into obscurity.

In the centuries that followed, all mention of the Half-Castes was wiped from the official histories. The Dragon-Blooded had no interest in admitting they once slew infants and children by the thousands, Anathema spawned or not. The Immaculate Order was charged with destroying any Half-Caste that might surface, and soon, the Children of the Chosen were forgotten.

With the return of the Solars, things are beginning to change. A few children of the surviving Lunars and Sidereals have surfaced, aiding their parents and, on occasion, the newly returned Solars. Some few Solars have even grown to sufficient power to conceive Half-Caste children, though most are mere infants. Still, these children will grow, and they could provide their parents with much needed lieutenants and aides. Not to be outdone, many Abyssals have taken mortal lovers and birthed their own Half-Castes. It is unknown if the newly discovered Infernal Exalted have begun similar experimentation, but there is no reason they should not be able to birth their own Half-Castes as well.

Many Half-Castes work in the service of their parents. Most Exalted are somewhat better parents than many gods, ghosts, fae and demons, even with the emotional problems brought on by the Great Curse. As a result, fewer Children of the Chosen feel compelled to rebel against their Exalted parents than other God-Blooded do. This is not to say that some Half-Castes do not wander or seek their own destiny. Some children of the Exalted are born not even knowing their Chosen sire. This can be due to any number of reasons, from an Exalted father not realizing he has conceived a child to the Half-Caste being orphaned after the Wyld Hunt kills his Exalted mother. Still, most Half-Castes must take care when traveling on their own lest they be slain by the enemies of the Celestial Exalts. Because of this, many Children of the Chosen who do not remain with their parents seek out the companionship of other God-Blooded, heroic mortals or similar beings. Creation is a dangerous place for even the Grandchosen of the Gods, and there is safety in numbers.

Heritage Power: Though far from the powerhouses their Celestial parents are, Half-Castes are exceptional physical and mental specimens. To reflect this, all Half-Castes receive on free dot in any Attribute and one extra Favored Ability during character creation.

Associations: Half-Castes feel a connection with the signs and symbols of their Exalted parents. The daughter of a Solar Dawn Caste would feel drawn to the season of spring, the colors saffron and lavender, the Eastern direction, fire and, to a lesser extent, the full moon and the Maiden of Battles. The son of a Sidereal Chosen of Endings would feel drawn to the color violet, the element of earth and the astrological house of the Violet Bier of Sorrows. In addition, all Half-Castes feel drawn to the prime associations of their parents. Thus, the child of a Lunar feels at peace under the moon while her Solar cousin feels comfort when the sun is in the sky.

Sobriquets: Anathema Spawn (derogatory), Children of the Chosen, Golden Children (Solar), Grandchosen of the Gods, Grandchosen of the Yozis (Infernal), Moon-Born (Lunar), Shadowwalkers (Abyssal), Star-Blessed (Sidereal)

Concepts: embittered lieutenant, forgotten bastard, hero without a cause, squire to the Exalted, voice of the Chosen

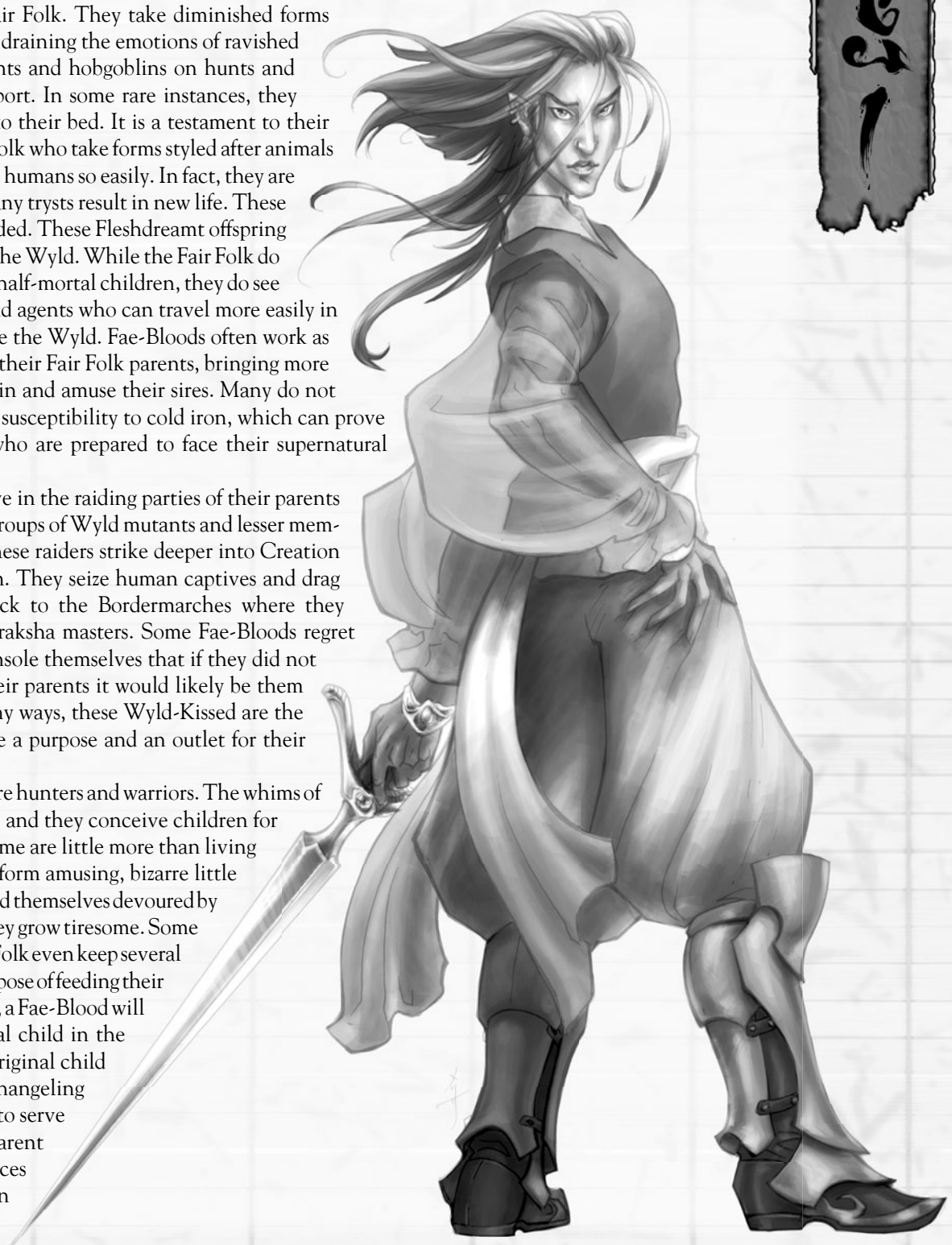
Essence Pool: (Essence x 4) + Willpower + (sum of Virtues)

This does mean that Half-Castes generally possess somewhat less Essence than most other God-Bloods. This deficit is balanced by their higher Attributes and extra Favored Ability, as well as their access to potent Exalted Charms.

My father wishes you all to know that the Chosen have returned.
We will no longer allow the tyranny of the Realm to rule here.
We will build a new golden age on the ashes of the Terrestrial betrayers.
Gaze into my eyes, and you will glimpse our glorious future.

Fae-Blooded

The unshaped raksha dwell in chaos and live in the deep Wyld where they can play with form and power in ways unavailable in Creation. Most of these beings ignore the shaped world, uninterested in its rules and structure, which strikes them as alien and unnecessary. Most view Creation as a strange and vaguely diverting playground, at best. At worst, they see it as a cancer festering in the middle of the Wyld. That said, some find themselves drawn to the Bordermarches and then to Creation itself. Some of these creatures are exiles, some are disgraced nobles, and others simply are curious hunters and explorers. These outcasts, rebels and nomads are what Creation knows as the Fair Folk. They take diminished forms and sustain themselves by draining the emotions of ravished humans. They lead mutants and hobgoblins on hunts and take humans as food or sport. In some rare instances, they even take these captives to their bed. It is a testament to their mastery of form that Fair Folk who take forms styled after animals and mortals can mate with humans so easily. In fact, they are surprisingly fertile, and many trysts result in new life. These offspring are the Fae-Blooded. These Fleshdreamt offspring can walk in Creation and the Wyld. While the Fair Folk do not fully understand their half-mortal children, they do see the usefulness of pawns and agents who can travel more easily in the calcifying areas outside the Wyld. Fae-Bloods often work as rangers and huntsmen for their Fair Folk parents, bringing more mortal playthings to sustain and amuse their sires. Many do not suffer the raksha's intense susceptibility to cold iron, which can prove useful when facing foes who are prepared to face their supernatural parents.



Fae-Blooded who serve in the raiding parties of their parents are often given charge of groups of Wyld mutants and lesser members of their own kind. These raiders strike deeper into Creation than normal Fair Folk can. They seize human captives and drag their terrified charges back to the Bordermarches where they are handed over to their raksha masters. Some Fae-Bloods regret their actions, but they console themselves that if they did not provide sustenance for their parents it would likely be them next on the menu. In many ways, these Wyld-Kissed are the fortunate ones. They have a purpose and an outlet for their passions and excesses.

Not all Fae-Blooded are hunters and warriors. The whims of the Fair Folk range wildly, and they conceive children for any number of reasons. Some are little more than living dolls or pets crafted to perform amusing, bizarre little plays and games. Others find themselves devoured by their own parents when they grow tiresome. Some particularly depraved Fair Folk even keep several children for the express purpose of feeding their peculiar hungers. At times, a Fae-Blood will be left in place of a mortal child in the homes of Creation. The original child is usually devoured. Her Changeling replacement either grows to serve as a spy and agent for her parent or is left to her own devices while her parent looks on

from afar to see what chaos the Fae-Blood creates. Such children tend to grow up apart from their communities. The Wyld-fueled madness in their blood often leads to erratic moods and strange proclivities. Even those who do not learn of their Fair Folk heritage cannot ignore the fact that something strange stirs within them.

As bad as things can be for these Fae-Bloods, it is even worse for some. At least Changelings are presumed to be human until their true natures surface. Not so for children born of raids or seductions by Fair Folk invaders. These Wyld-Kissed offspring are often slain or cast out at a young age. Even their mortal parents tend to reject them, convincing themselves that the Fae-Blooded are more affliction than blood relation. Some are rescued by their Fair Folk sires and pressed into service. Others survive as best they can. Some simply perish. Abandoned Fae-Bloods often become scourges of the humans who rejected them, and many take great pleasure in torturing, hunting and killing mortals.

Unlike other God-Blooded, the Fair Folk have no great plans for their children. They are children defined primarily by neglect, abuse and the constant danger of being devoured by their own raksha parents. Even demons tend to think more of their children's utility. It is because of this that Fae-Blooded who escape or are ignored by their Fair Folk sires often aggressively seek some greater destiny. Some seek to hunt the forces of the Wyld, perhaps even trying to protect mortals from further abuse at the hands of mutants, hobgoblins and Fair Folk nobles. Others become assassins and mercenaries, trying to find purpose in violence and wealth. In all cases, they always find themselves drawn to the Bordermarches and beyond as their Wyld-infused blood calls to them. Some eventually retreat into the chaos beyond Creation never to return. For most, this is a form of suicide—a way to quiet the persistent madness that has plagued them for their entire lives by surrendering to the hungry beasts of the Wyld. Others continue to wander, seeking allies and companions among other outcasts and exiles.

Heritage Power: Like their parents, the Fae-Blooded are immune to the ravages of the Wyld. They can venture into the deep chaos and maintain their form and sanity. This protection does not extend naturally to their possessions, though they can spend three motes or one temporary Willpower to protect their belongings for a scene. This immunity does not protect them against direct applications of Wyld energies or glamour. Yet, their half-breed nature does grant them a one-die bonus to rolls to resist such effects.

Associations: Fae-Blooded feel connection to flowers, bright colors, jewels, music and other objects and concepts that suggest passion. They tend to be drawn to excess, and many emulate their Fair Folk parents' extreme moods. Outside the Wyld, they are most at home in theaters, brothels, arenas and other places where emotions run high.

Sobriquets: Changelings, Daughters/Sons of Chaos, Fleshdreamt, Wyld-Kissed

Concepts: decadent wanderer, gifted artist, huntsman, raider, unknown Changeling

Essence Pool: (Essence x 8)

Fae-Blooded cannot regain Essence through rest or meditation in areas lacking Wyld taint. They are able to feed on human emotion in the same way their Fair Folk parents can (see **Exalted**, p. 284), and many Fae-Blooded seeking to avoid their kin use this ability to survive for extended periods in Creation.

Please, my dear… be brave.
The only thing more delicious than your fear is your defiance.
And I would taste all of you before we are done.

God-Blooded Traits

God-Blooded do not differ much from heroic mortals or Exalted in the traits they use. However, some traits have particular utility for certain God-Blooded, while others are somewhat rare given their nature.

Useful Crafts

By and large, God-Blooded learn the same Craft Abilities as other characters. The uses of mundane crafts are the same as for any other characters. Only certain specialized crafts are worth noting as they can be especially useful for certain types of God-Blooded. For example, a Ghost-Blood could find Craft (Jade-crafting) or Craft (Moliation) useful if she spends much of her time serving and interacting with her dead relatives. Some rare Sidereal Half-Castes might learn the basics of Craft (Fate), or a Fae-Blood might have some skill with Craft (Glamour). These God-Bloods may possess various appropriate specialties to further refine their technique. Storytellers might decide that certain exotic crafts cannot be learned by God-Bloods, and players wishing to take these Abilities for their character should consult with their Storyteller before doing so.

Merits and Flaws

If the Storyteller uses the Merits and Flaws found earlier in this book, players have even greater variety to work with when creating their God-Blooded characters. Merits can be purchased with bonus points provided by Inheritance if desired, and Flaws can provide bonus points for additional mutations and Charms. The God-Blooded often live troubled, complicated and interesting lives, and Merits and Flaws can help flesh this out.

Not all Merits and Flaws are appropriate for God-Blooded, however. Some benefit only certain types of characters or provide abilities the God-Blooded already have thanks to mutations and heritage powers. Players and Storytellers should consider whether a given Merit really is a benefit or a Flaw is truly worth extra bonus points before selecting it.

Common Merits and Flaws found among God-Blooded are: Acute Sense, Danger Sense, Enchanting Features, Heir Apparent, Heirloom (from a loving parent), Internal Compass, Luck, Paragon of [Virtue], Priest (of their magical parent), Prodigy, Special Sense, Derangement, Diminished Attributes, Enemy, Obligation, Sickly, Sun-Seared, Unlucky and Wanted. It is up to the players to determine whether Merits and Flaws such as Derangement or Danger Sense are tied to their characters' magical nature or if they stem from a more mundane source.

Backgrounds

There are no definite restrictions on most Backgrounds for God-Blooded. The son of a god could possess an artifact, familiar, followers or other Backgrounds much as an Exalt or other character could. A child of a ghost might be given an Underworld manse by a generous parent. Few God-Blooded have cults that worship them, but such things do happen on occasion. Also, a God-Blood sometimes receives devotion and prayers by association with his supernatural parent. The only real restrictions on Backgrounds are ones that are simply impossible. For example, without some mutation that expands their lives, God-Blooded don't live the centuries necessary to possess the ghost Background Age (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. V—The Roll of Glorious Divinity**, pp. 117–118). Players wishing to make occasional use of a variety of Backgrounds that are available to their characters' parents should consider taking dots in the new Background, Patron (see pp. 129-130). Also, a God-Blood with the Patron Background usually doesn't have many Backgrounds with more dots than his Patron rating. Those God-Bloods without patrons rarely acquire more than one or two dots in a particular Background if left solely to their own devices, though this is a guideline, not a rule.

Storytellers might wish to limit certain Backgrounds for God-Bloods in their games. Doing so is completely acceptable, though they should try to inform their players of such limitations before character creation.

Inheritance

Not all God-Blooded are created equal. The amount of otherworldly power a child of the supernatural possesses depends on the power possessed by her supernatural parent. The Inheritance Background represents this power. Inheritance not only reflects the power of a God-Blooded's parent, it also provides the God-Blooded character with power of her own. Each dot in Inheritance provides a God-Blooded character with valuable bonus points that can be used to boost her traits far beyond those of normal mortals. Bonus points gained through Inheritance can be spent on anything except Backgrounds. Dots in Inheritance also determine how many negative mutations a God-Blood can possess. Taking these negative mutations provides even more bonus points.

Among the God-Blooded, the Inheritance rating reflects the status and power of the immortal parent, be he god, demon, ghost, raksha or Exalt. It also makes the God-Blood's superhuman nature easier to identify. If a player rolls (Perception + Occult) for his character to notice signs of supernatural in the God-Blood's appearance, he receives a number of bonus dice equal to the

target's Inheritance rating. It is worth noting that some God-Blooded have such obvious physical mutations to render such rolls to detect their nature unnecessary.

Some beings, such as various gods and demons, can grant an Inheritance Background rating to an existing character not of their blood. In such cases of "adopted" God-Blooded, Inheritance provides experience points instead of bonus points.

Trait Effects:

X You have no supernatural heritage. It is possible that some distant ancestor once lay with a god or other powerful being, but you have inherited none of that power.

• Your blood is weak. Your sire was a weaker demon of the First Circle, a minor spirit, one of the least of the Fair Folk commoners or a young ghost. You receive six bonus points at character creation and may take up to 10 points in negative mutations. If you acquire this Background later, you instead gain 10 experience points and up to five additional points from negative mutations.

•• Your blood is fair. Your sire was an established Exalt, a noteworthy spirit, a powerful demon of the First Circle, a potent Fair Folk commoner or an old ghost. You receive 12 bonus points at character creation and may take up to 15 points in negative mutations. If you acquire this Background later, you instead gain 30 experience points and up to 15 additional points from negative mutations.

••• Your ancestry is notable. You can claim as your sire a demon of the Second Circle, a powerful Exalt, an important elemental or local god, an ancient ghost or a Fair Folk noble. You receive 18 bonus points at character creation and may take up to 15 points in negative mutations. If you acquire this Background later, you instead gain 60 experience points and up to 30 additional points from negative mutations.

•••• Your lineage is impeccable. Your sire is a champion among the demons of the Second Circle, a centuries-old Exalt, a greater god, one of the mightiest ghosts in the Underworld or a great leader among the Fair Folk. Many minor gods and demons see you as a peer. You receive 24 bonus points at character creation and may take up to 20 points in negative mutations. If you acquire this Background later, you instead gain

100 experience points and up to 50 additional points from negative mutations.

••••• The purest of blood. You are nearly an immortal in your own right. Your sire is a demon of the Third Circle, a powerful god, a surviving Exalt from the First Age, a ghost who commands even the Deathlords' respect (if not one of the Deathlords) or the mightiest of the Fair Folk. You are both respected and envied by many lesser beings and could one day transcend your mortal flesh completely. You receive 30 bonus points at character creation and may take up to 20 points in negative mutations. If you acquire this Background later, you instead gain 150 experience points and up to 75 additional points from negative mutations.

Taking Mutations as Merits and Flaws

Theoretically, since mutations grant and cost bonus points, they could be taken as Merits and Flaws by non-God-Blooded characters. This could enable some interesting character concepts, such as a mortal hero who possess some genetic artifact from an ancient ancestor's tryst with a god but is not himself actually God-Blooded. Storytellers wishing to allow this can theoretically just use the bonus point costs of the various mutations for these Merits and Flaws. They might want to consider two things first, though.

First, the mutations in this chapter are designed for use with God-Blooded. They are part of the powers that make God-Blooded special and superhuman. Because of this, not all of them match up perfectly with Merits and Flaws of the same general value. Therefore, while Perfect Healing Factor costs six bonus points, it is generally more powerful than a standard six-point Merit if taken by a heroic mortal, yet not very useful at all if taken by an Exalt. Storytellers who wish to allow these mutations as Merits and Flaws should consider changing the costs to reflect how useful the power is. Also, Storytellers should feel free to disallow any or all mutations to be taken as Merits and Flaws if they feel it does not fit the spirit and theme of their games.

Second, allowing other characters to take these mutations takes away some of the unique nature of the God-Blooded. This may or may not be desirable, but it should be considered before allowing such traits to be selected as Merits and Flaws

Patron

A powerful being, either her sire or some other being, has taken an interest in the character. These patrons offer powerful rewards and support but expect great favors in return. Some patrons view their charges as lieutenants and subordinates, while others dote on them like spoiled children. In every case, the Patron expects the character to return his attention, affection and rewards with loyalty and devotion. The more powerful and active the patron, the more is expected of the character in return.

Each dot of Patron counts as a dot of Mentor (see **Exalted**, p. 113). Also, for every dot in Patron, the character can call upon the resources of her patron once per game session. This reflects the God-Blood being allowed to avail herself of one of her patron's resources. Each use of Patron in this manner can provide a single use of an appropriate Background at a rating equal to the character's rating in Patron. The Storyteller should decide which Backgrounds a particular patron can provide, but some commonly available Backgrounds are: Allies, Artifact, Backing, Command, Contacts, Cult, Familiar, Followers, Henchman, Influence, Manse and Resources. These temporary Backgrounds typically last no more than one scene.

Keeping the benefits of a patron are completely dependent on keeping that patron happy. A divine parent might cut off support for a rebellious God-Blooded child, or a demonic sire might refuse to aid disobedient Demon-Blooded. Historically, demons and ghosts are the least forgiving and tolerant of patrons, though many gods and Exalts are famous for their fickle natures and fierce tempers. Some patrons might even cut off character temporarily to teach them what the patron considers is an important lesson.

Trait Effects:

X You have no special relationship with your supernatural parent or any other powerful being. Perhaps your sire doesn't even know you exist.

• You have little connection with your patron. He occasionally does you small favors when he feels like it and expects the same in return. He either is not very powerful or is very removed from mortal affairs.

•• Your patron will lend you occasional use of his lesser servants and resources. He doesn't expect much in return, just a bit of devotion or service from time to time. He is likely of average power and takes some interest in Creation and his children.

••• Your patron is an inconstant but major influence in your life. He grants potent boons in exchange

for quests, offerings and prayers in his name. He is either a reasonably powerful being or else a very powerful but often absent one.

•••• Your patron's power is impressive, and so are his demands on you. He sees you as a regular agent or favored child and expects you to act with loyalty and earnestness. He is undoubtedly powerful and wise.

••••• Your patron is among the most powerful of his kind, and he knows it. He is willing to grant great benefits to children (blood-relatives or adopted) who mind their manners, do as they are told and act with the utmost filial piety and devotion. Such patrons are among the wisest and most powerful beings in existence, and they are capable of great generosity and even greater acts of vengeance.

God-Blooded Mutations

Much like those mutated by the energies of the Wyld, God-Blooded possess a number of positive and negative mutations. The simple act of being born with their exceptional parentage twists them in ways both wonderful and terrible. Mortal bodies are simply not meant to carry the blood of gods, ghosts or demons untouched. And unlike Exalted or other such mortals infused with divine power, God-Bloods were not crafted to the exacting specifications of greater beings. Instead, they are born in the same messy chaotic manner as all mortals. As a result, God-Bloods gain their powers and problems in a more random and less predictable manner. True, some traits are inherited directly from their sires and sometimes continue to breed true for many generations. Some mutations are either minor or manifest internally. Other changes brought about by a sire's immortal blood can manifest in strange, sometimes horrifying, ways.

Examples of various mutations available for God-Blooded characters to select are listed in the following section. Mutations that manifest only in certain types of God-Blooded are noted as such in their descriptions. Each mutation costs or grants a number of bonus or experience points based on exactly what it does:

Positive Mutation Costs

Type of Mutation	Bonus Point Cost	Experience Cost
Pox	1	3
Affliction	2	6
Blight	4	12
Abomination	6	18

Negative Mutation Bonuses

Type of Mutation	Bonus Point Cost	Experience Cost
Deficiency	1	3
Debility	2	6
Deformity	4	12

Note that there are no abomination-level negative mutations. Such God-Blooded are sometimes born, but those thus afflicted do not survive long after birth. Some expire before their parents' eyes, while others are too simple, warped or mad to ever survive and are quietly put down. These malformations are very rare, as the child's supernatural heritage tends to sustain all but the most twisted of forms. In fact, many abominations manifest in such extreme ways that it often seems to casual observers that the God-Blood is cursed or terribly mutated. In all of these cases, however, the abominations grant great power that overcompensates for any limitations they bring.

Optional Rule: Lineage

Storytellers and players who wish to add a bit more predictability and consistency to God-Blooded mutations might require players to mark a number of bonus points as being universal to all God-Blooded children of a particular supernatural parent. For example, perhaps all the children of a particular demon possess the Night Eyes and Healing Factor mutations or all the children of a certain god possess Immortality. Such traits should be marked (or considered) "Inherited"—a distinction important to certain other mutations such as Breed True.

Players should still pick their own mutations for their characters, but marking certain traits as universal among all God-Blooded with a certain sire can add an element of familial familiarity to the game. It is recommended that no more than half of the bonus points given by the Inheritance Background be marked in this fashion. Even in cases where the sire's blood produces fairly constant results when mating with mortals, there is still a good amount of diversity.

Positive Mutations

Poxes

Attribute Reallocation

Some God-Blooded manifest powerful strengths at the cost of weaknesses in other areas. This mutation reflects that tendency. Characters with Attribute

Reallocation can reduce one of their Attributes by one dot to increase another different Attribute by one dot. Doing so almost always involves some physical manifestation. A God-Blood who trades Strength for Intelligence might appear frail with a slightly enlarged cranium; one who trades Perception for Stamina might develop bony ridges over his eyes and ears. Attributes can be raised above normal maximums with this mutation, though traits cannot be reduced below 1. Doing so would result in death.

Note: There is no reason to reallocate Attribute points within the same category (Physical, Social, Mental) at character creation. Such reconstruction sometimes occurs in cases when a mortal is adopted by a supernatural being and gains the Inheritance Background during play, though. This mutation can be taken multiples times, though Storytellers should be cautious about letting a player craft characters that are incredibly unbalanced. It is recommended that no Attribute can be affected (raised or reduced) more than once by the selection of this mutation.

Deceptive Frailty

God-Bloods with Deceptive Frailty seem small, slight, pale, sickly or otherwise physically inferior. They have all their normal Attributes, health levels and so on, but they appear to be much less physically capable. This mutation is most common among Ghost-Blooded, who often look moments from death. Deceptive Frailty adds one bonus die to attempts to convince or fool someone into thinking the character is weak or infirm. There could also be other side effects, such as inspiring pity or protective feelings in some individuals. Of course, a God-Blood with this mutation also looks like a likely target for mugging, assault or bullying and is likely to invite such action. Whether or not this is a positive or negative effect is for the character to decide.

Dynastic Inheritance

God-Blooded with this mutation pass some of their supernatural parent's power on to their own children, but only a fraction. Any children who are born of this God-Blood gain half the bonus points provided by their parent's Inheritance. Any grandchildren gain half those points, and so on. If the Storyteller is using the optional rules on Lineage (see sidebar on p. 130), then all traits marked "Inherited" are passed on first.

God-Blooded with Dynastic Inheritance wishing to preserve the power of their blood must either engage in selective breeding with their own descendants or find other supernatural beings to infuse power into the bloodline. In some areas of Creation, whole clans of inbred God-bloods can be found, such as the Lintha pirates.

Fetter Sense (Ghost-Blooded and Abyssal Half-Castes Only)

By spending a mote of Essence, a character with this mutation can detect whether an object is a ghost's Fetter by touching the item.

Longevity

God-Blooded often live much longer than their mortal cousins. A character with this mutation lives to a base age of 100 years plus 10 years for every rank of Essence. After this time, the God-Blood's player must make a (Stamina + Essence) roll at difficulty 2. Success guarantees another 10 years of life barring violence, disease or other unnatural causes. Failure results in death from old age sometime in the next decade. Willpower cannot be spent on this roll.

Night Eyes

Your character's eyes have changed so that he can see in darkness as easily as daylight. All penalties for poor visibility due to lack of illumination are eliminated. This mutation usually involves a change in the physical appearance of the God-Blood's eyes themselves, but this is not always the case.

Stone Hands

The God-Blooded's hands, feet and other unarmed striking surfaces are rock hard and cause much more severe wounds. All unarmed damage done by the character is now treated as lethal rather than bashing damage. Note that this mutation is mechanically identical to the mutation Claws/Fangs (see **Exalted**, p. 288) but is presented to illustrate how differently mutations with the same mechanical effects can manifest.

Afflictions

Beast Speak

A God-Blood with this mutation can talk to animals. There is no guarantee that the animals have anything useful to say or that they will be friendly, but he can communicate with them. Doing so allows the God-Blood to use social combat with animals, though standard uses of Socialize and Bureaucracy don't really work. Presence still works effectively, however. This mutation applies only to mundane, mortal animals.

Breed True

Usually, there is no guarantee that a God-Blood will pass his supernatural abilities along to his own offspring. Breeding with mortals thins the blood over generations and causes most mutations and special powers to fade. Yet, God-Blooded with this mutation pass the same bonus traits provided to them by the Inheritance Background on to any offspring. If the optional rules for Lineage are used (see p. 130), then all traits marked "Inherited" are passed on automatically. As a side effect, God-Blooded

with this mutation can mate with mortals, animals, spirits and most other beings to produce their own brood. Mating with a creature of greater Essence and supernatural power, however, results in God-Blooded children who favor the other parent.

This mutation is rare outside beastmen and children of very powerful supernatural beings whose nature tends to completely overwhelm mortal blood. As a rule, the forces of fate and destiny generally resist the concept of a Creation overrun by vast clans of half-blood supernatural beings. This keeps this mutation from often manifesting outside of areas of great chaos, such as the Wyld, where most beastmen and other true breed God-Blooded are born.

Deathsight (Ghost-Blooded and Abyssal Half-Castes Only)

This mutation allows the character to perceive sickness and impending death in the same way ghosts can. This mutation usually results in the God-Blood's eyes having a bizarre appearance, typically extreme paleness.

Eyes of Wicked Madness (Demon-Blooded and Fae-Blooded Only)

At will, Demon-Blooded and Fae-Blooded with this mutation can meet someone's gaze and reveal to them the terrors and madness of Malfeas or the deepest parts of the Wyld. Players of mortals who meet their gaze must make a Valor roll at difficulty 2. Failure means the mortal must flee in terror. Mortals physically unable to flee will instead collapse into near-catatonic terror. Supernatural beings are not affected in this manner, but even they find such visions unsettling.

Characters with this mutation often have strangely colored eyes, sometimes with strangely shaped irises or pupils. Some unfortunate children of demons and Fair Folk have eyes that always show images of terror and madness uncontrollably. This version of the mutation is not an affliction, but is instead treated as a debility that grants rather than costs bonus points or experience.

Hereditary Position

The greatness of the God-Blood is written onto her very soul with this mutation. One who possesses Hereditary Position is entitled to assume status equal to her sire should she ever find a way to transcend her mortal blood and become a fully supernatural being like her parent.

Note: This mutation does not itself guarantee that the character will ever transcend her mortality to become a true god, demon or other being. It simply means that, if the character can achieve this, she is guaranteed a

spot in the hierarchy of Heaven, citizenry of Malfeas, the Fair Folk courts or from whenever her parent comes. Reaching this state will almost certainly require a great effort and could be the end goal of an entire series. Beings aware that a character possesses this mutation will likely afford her greater respect, though many will also see her as a potential threat.

Material Resonance (Half-Caste only)

God-Blooded can attune themselves to magical artifacts by connecting with their supernatural parentage and spending the appropriate Essence. They do not, however, gain magical materials bonuses from such attunement. Yet, Half-Castes with this mutation do gain these benefits as if they were full Exalts of the same type as their parent.

Natural Exorcist

God-Bloods with this mutation have a natural affinity for banishing and expelling spirits, demons or ghosts. When using rites, Charms or other means to exorcise or banish such beings, they receive two bonus dice to all pools to do so. This mutation must be taken separately for each broad class of creatures it effects: ghosts, demons and spirits/gods. This mutation is most common among children descended from the type of creature they are skilled at exorcising and certain Half-Castes, such as the children of Zenith Caste Solars.

Blights

Caste Affinity (Half-Castes Only)

A God-Blood with this mutation has a special affinity with his Exalted parent's caste. By spending five motes and one Willpower, he can use his parent's caste anima power as if he were a full Exalt of the same type. This cost is in addition to any Essence and Willpower costs of using the anima itself. It is very draining on the Half-Caste to channel his parent's powers. These effects last as long as they do for Exalted of the same type.

Child of the Waters

This mutation allows the God-Blood to be at home underwater. Child of the Waters is not necessarily restricted to a particular type of God-Blood, but the character's parent must have some association with water, the ocean or marine animals. A water elemental's daughter would be a logical choice for this mutation, but a Solar's son would not.

This mutation has two effects. First, it lets the character breathe underwater or at least hold her breath for a very long time (player's choice). Because of the God-Blood's half-breed nature, she cannot stay submerged forever. She must eventually return to the surface to sustain her mortal half, at least long enough to take a few deep breaths. Yet, she can stay under for a very long time without surfacing (Stamina x 30 minutes). Those wishing for their characters to stay under longer can make a (Stamina + Resistance) roll with each success granting another 10 minutes before the God-Blooded must resurface.

The second effect is that the God-Blood can now swim at the same speeds at which she can walk and run. She also suffers no penalties for fighting in water. This mutation doesn't give her any special immunity from strong currents or water-based hazards, it simply allows the character to move freely in and breathe water.

Deathwalker (Ghost-Blooded and Abyssal Half-Castes only)

Characters with this mutation are considered to be fully material to ghosts. They may always touch, attack and physically interact with these creatures. They may also be harmed, touched or otherwise affected by ghosts. This mutation grants no special ability to perceive immaterial spirits, however.

Elemental Puissance

This mutation grants physical might to God-Bloods in direct contact with elements related to their divine parents. This mutation typically manifests in the children of elemental spirits. By spending five motes of Essence and one Willpower, a God-Blood with this mutation gains two additional dots of Strength and two levels of bashing and lethal soak for the rest of the scene. These bonuses apply only as long as the character is in direct contact with the element. The bonuses return to the character if he reconnects with the element during the scene without the need for additional Essence and Willpower expenditures. The mutation provides no protection from the element itself, so a God-Blood who lights himself on fire to channel the power of his parent will still burn unless he possesses other protection from the flames. The element must also be pure and untainted, so stale air, paved earth or polluted water will not suffice.

Demon-Blooded, Ghost-Blooded and Fae-Blooded may possess a variant of Elemental Puissance. For Demon-Bloods, they can gain these bonuses when inside Malfeas. Ghost-Bloods can gain them when in the Underworld or a shadowland. Fae-Bloods can draw power while in the Wyldlands or the Bordermarches. While channeling this power, a God-Blood physically changes to more resemble the element or environment from which he is drawing power. Elemental God-Bloods tend to resemble Terrestrial Exalted or elementals in mortal form, while other characters look more demonic, spectral or fae. Half-Castes cannot take this mutation save for Infernal and Abyssal Half-Castes, who can have the same version of this mutation as Demon- or Ghost-Bloods.

God-Blooded Prodigy

This mutation supernaturally expands the boundaries of the God-Blood's mind and muscle memory. As a result, the character can select an additional Favored Ability. This is treated as identical to any other Favored Ability or Abilities he possesses. This mutation may be taken up to four times.

Healing Factor

With this mutation, a God-Blood's flesh heals and bones knit much faster and more completely than normal mortals' do. All but the most horrific or unusual wounds mend without scarring. Characters with this mutation heal levels of bashing, lethal and aggravated damage as if they were Exalted (see **Exalted**, pp. 148–149). God-Blooded with a Healing Factor can also automatically staunch bleeding on any tick when they may act. Outside of combat, bleeding stops automatically after five seconds. Disabling wounds are healed after a week of rest or two weeks normal activity and do not require the usual surgery (see **Exalted,** pp. 151–152). God-Blooded with this mutation also gain two bonus dice for all rolls to avoid the effects of disease, poison and infection.

Immortality

While not wholly supernatural, the God-Blood gains a complete immunity to the ravages of time. At some point, usually early adulthood, the character simply stops aging. The God-Blood can still be killed or succumb to disease or the elements, but he will never die of old age. Characters possessing this mutation are also immune to any spells or other supernatural effects that cause aging. This mutation is most common among children of gods and other beings who themselves do not age.

Possession Immunity

God-Blooded with this mutation possess a spirit so powerful and supernatural that they cannot be possessed. Spirit Charms and Arcanoi meant to allow for it simply fail to effect them. Note that many God-Bloods immune to possession are still capable of being possessed by their own parents and supernatural relatives. This effect is modeled by selecting the Limited Manifestation deficiency (see pp. 136-137) to reflect the conditions when Possession Immunity does not work.

Spirit Shift

God-Bloods cannot usually become immaterial. They are, despite their supernatural heritage, beings of flesh and blood. Characters with this mutation can overcome this limitation temporarily, but at great cost. By spending five motes and one temporary Willpower, the God-Blood can become immaterial for (Essence + Willpower + Stamina) ticks. This might not seem like a long time, but it is more than sufficient to pass through walls, slip bonds, evade capture and do other useful things. Characters wishing to maintain this mutation and stay immaterial may do so by activating it again. They do not have to materialize first to do so. Dematerializing requires enough concentration that the character can't use Charms such as Possession while in this form. Also during this time, they can harm and be harmed by other immaterial creatures.

There is one more side effect of using this mutation. The transformation back into the material form is very painful, though not life-threatening. After the character materializes, he immediately takes an unsoakable health level of bashing damage. If he maintained the Spirit Shift by spending additional Essence and Willpower, he takes one additional health level of bashing damage for each extra expenditure. This mutation is not found among Half-Castes and is rare outside of God-Blooded and Ghost-Blooded, who inherit this affinity from their immaterial parents.

Abominations

Elemental Rejuvenation (Elemental God-Blooded Only)

Children of elementals can use this mutation to duplicate some of their parent's ability to heal themselves while in contact with the raw element with which they are associated. This process is not as powerful as their parents' ability—their human sides dilute the ability. Still, their recuperative powers are impressive. Using this mutation requires full concentration, and no other actions can be attempted while this power is in use. While concentrating and in contact with the appropriate element, the God-Blooded can regenerate one health level of damage or restore one spent Essence mote per six ticks. God-Blooded using Elemental Rejuvenation are not harmed by exposure to the element even if they normally would be.

This mutation comes with a strong resemblance to the element in question. The eyes, hair or skin of God-Blooded with Elemental Mutation often change to resemble the element. In many ways, this is similar to the changes in appearance among the Dragon-Blooded, and more than one elemental God-Blood has been confused with a Terrestrial Exalt.

Essence Attack

This mutation grants an ability to channel Essence into a direct damaging attack. Some God-Blooded can breathe fire, while others can spit acid or generate bolts of solar energy. The exact nature of the attack is influenced by the character's parentage.

By spending four motes of Essence, a God-Blood can generate an attack that has an attack pool of (the

character's Essence + Dexterity + [Archery, Brawl or Occult (player's choice)]) and has a base lethal damage of (Essence + Stamina). These attacks cannot be blocked without the use of Charms or spells, but they can be dodged.

This mutation is almost never obvious when it is not in use. The attacks themselves, however, are far from subtle. They mark the God-Blood as someone not wholly human.

God Body

The God Body mutation is actually a broad classification for a number of abominations that all allow the God-Blooded to transform their physical forms into less human-looking and more powerful forms that boast features that favor their supernatural parents. A child of a river god might transform into a scaly merman with hair of living water, while the spawn of an ancient ghost might appear as a dread being with fangs, dead eyes and bone-white skin. No two God Bodies are exactly alike, and even children of the same parent who possess this mutation can manifest drastically different appearances.

Each type of God-Blood calls this mutation something different. God-Bloods call it God Body, Ghost-Bloods call it Corpse Form, Fae-Bloods call it Goblin Body, and Demon-Bloods call it Hell Form. Half-Castes rarely manifest this mutation and have no special name for it, though occasionally children of the Chosen possess the power to transform themselves into beasts, metal-skinned powerhouses and the like.

The God-Body Mutation costs six motes and one Willpower to use. Transformation between a God-Blood's normal form and his God Body takes five ticks and is usually accompanied by swirling energies, mist or some other special effect. Once transformed, the God-Blood gains three dots to distribute among Strength, Dexterity and Stamina. He also gains +2L/+2B soak and can now cause lethal damage with barehanded attacks. Attribute allotments are chosen when this mutation first manifests and cannot be changed. The mutation's effects persist for one scene.

This mutation is always obvious when it is in use and cannot be hidden without the use of magic or heavy clothing. In any case, while in God Body form, characters find it difficult to relate to and deal socially with normal mortals. As a result, they suffer a -2 internal penalty on all non-intimidation-based social interaction rolls.

This mutation can be taken multiple times to reflect a particularly powerful God Body form. Each time the mutation is selected, the character gains another three Attribute dots to distribute and an additional +2L/+2B soak. Social penalties do not stack with multiple God Body mutations.

Great Mien

This mutation allows a God-Blood to temporarily channel his supernatural parent's incredible beauty or awesome appearance to charm or intimidate others.

By spending five motes and one Willpower, the character may take on a supernatural aspect. This aspect grants three bonus Attribute dots that are divided between the Social Attributes (Charisma, Manipulation and Appearance) and reduce the cost of all Social-keyword Charms and other social powers by two motes. These effects last for the rest of the scene, and the Attribute bonuses must be set when this mutation is selected.

In addition to these effects, the God-Blooded appears noticeably less human when this mutation is in effect. His eyes glow with power, and his hair and skin change slightly to reflect his supernatural heritage. Valor rolls must be made for mortals seeing him against a difficulty equal to the God-Blood's Essence rating. Failure grants the character one automatic success on all dice rolls to charm, intimidate, seduce or persuade the mortal. Supernatural characters are immune to this effect.

Natural Immunity (God-Blooded, Ghost-Blooded, Demon-Blooded and Abyssal Half-Castes Only)

God-Blooded with this mutation are partially immune to forces related to their supernatural parents. Children of elemental spirits are resistant to the elements associated with their parents. Children of ghosts and Abyssal Half-Castes are resistant to necromancy effects and harmful effects generated by the dead. Demon-Blooded have similar immunities, but against infernal powers. Other God-Blooded do not manifest this mutation, though all Fae-Bloods have an inherent resistance to Wyld energies.

This mutation provides total immunity to natural effects related to their parentage. Thus, the daughter of a fire spirit with this mutation will not be burned by any natural fire or heat. Supernatural effects can harm the God-Blood, but they receive three bonus dice to resist any such effects. Supernatural effects that inflict direct damage are treated as if the God-Blood possesses three extra levels of soak.

In addition to these passive immunities, the God-Blooded can spend three motes or one Willpower and become completely immune for an entire scene to supernatural effects from any creature whose Essence rating is equal to or less than hers. Powers and effects from creatures with greater Essence still work, but the God-Blood receives double the usual benefits of her Natural Immunity for the rest of the scene (six bonus dice or six soak).

Perfect Healing Factor

This mutation functions as the Healing Factor blight (see p. 134) but with additional advantages. God-Blooded with this mutation heal one level of bashing damage every minute and one level of lethal damage per hour. The healing of aggravated damage is unaffected. Furthermore, this healing occurs whether or not the character is resting. God-Blooded with this mutation also ignore the Crippling keyword for any injuries. Limbs regrow, and maiming injuries recover as soon as the damage levels are healed. Infection and all non-supernatural diseases do not affect the character at all. This mutation is common among children of Half-Caste Lunars as well as God-Blooded of other types whose parents are themselves capable of incredible feats of regeneration.

Wyld Walk (Fae-Blooded Only)

The children of the Fair Folk have learned to travel the Wyld with accuracy and speed unavailable to most. By spending 10 motes and one temporary Willpower, a character can increase his travel rates in the Wyld. This movement boost does not affect the Dash maneuver. It only allows the character to cover long distances with Wyld-enhanced strides. Wyld Walk lasts for an entire day. The Fae-Blood's effective travel distances are divided by (1 + Essence). For example, a Fae-Blooded with a permanent Essence rating of 1 can cover 30 miles as if it were 15; one with Essence 2 can treat the same distance as if it were 10 miles. Fae-Blooded use this power to outpace and outmaneuver those they hunt, as well as to pull far ahead of pursuers.

Wyld Ward (Fae-Blooded Only)

All Fae-Blooded are immune to the warping effects of the Wyld, but some are even able to transfer this immunity to others for a time. They must touch the person they intend to affect and spend eight motes and one temporary Willpower. Their players must then make a (Manipulation + Craft [Glamour]) roll, with a difficulty equal to the subject's Essence. Success means that the target is shielded from the effects of the Wyld for a number of days equal to (successes rolled + 1).

This immunity is the same as a Fae-Blood's own and, as such, does not protect against active uses of Glamour or focused attacks using the Wyld.

Variable Mutations

Some mutations are not automatically classified as poxes, afflictions, blights or abominations. Instead, they can be taken as any of these levels of mutation. The more powerful the version of these mutations, the more effective they are, and the more they change the God-Blooded.

Essence Abundance

This mutation provides additional Essence to a God-Blood's normal Essence pool. This is a result of even more of her divine parent's supernatural power being infused into her being. The amount of extra Essence granted depends on the level of the mutation: A pox provides 3 motes, an affliction 6, a blight 12 and an abomination 16. This mutation grants no additional ability to use Essence. It simply provides more available raw power for those God-Blooded who know how to use it.

Supernatural Quickness

This mutation allows a God-Blood to move faster than normal without the use of Charms. The character treats his Dexterity as being greater than normal for the purposes of movement only. The exact boost in speed depends on the level of the mutation. A pox treats Dexterity as one greater for determining movement, an affliction two greater, a blight four greater, an abomination six greater. God-Blooded who possess this mutation may or may not appear differently at their discretion.

Supernatural Fortitude

Although they are more powerful than normal mortals, most God-Blooded are still remarkably fragile compared to most supernatural beings. God-Bloods with this mutation are the exception. Their bodies have been changed to be more resistant to trauma, physical damage and pain.

This mutation provides additional health levels based on the extremity of the mutation. As a pox, this mutation provides one additional -1 health level. Afflictions provide one -0 health level. Blights provide two -2 health levels, and abominations grant two extra -0 health levels or three -2 health levels.

These mutations do not necessarily change a God-Blood physically. Many God-Blooded, however, have tougher or slightly oddly colored skin, increased body mass or some other telltale sign of their Supernatural Fortitude.

Negative Mutations

Deficiencies

Limited Manifestation

This is not so much a mutation in and of itself as a warping or weakness in an existing positive mutation. Limited Manifestation either slightly reduces the overall effectiveness of a mutation or more commonly limits circumstances where it applies. This happens only with significant mutations, and the effects can never destroy the overall positive nature of the mutation it affects. For example, a character might have a Limited Manifestation on her God Body that allows the God-Blood to

transform only at night. Another might have a limit on her Healing Factor that prevents the character from healing fire damage.

This mutation can be taken more than once. Each time, it puts a limitation on a different positive mutation the God-Blooded character possesses. Poxes cannot be affected by this mutation.

Too Perfect

The beauty and physical form of the God-Blood with this mutation is so pristine it's actually somewhat disturbing. His features are too symmetrical, his hair too well groomed, his eyes too bright and clear. When one first encounters such a God-Blood, there is no real effect. He can charm, seduce and engage people easily due to superficial attractiveness. But as a character spends more time around the God-Blood, she becomes unsettled. To reflect this unease, God-Blooded who are too perfect suffer a +1 difficulty penalty on all social rolls pertaining to characters with whom they have been in personal contact for more than an hour. This penalty eventually fades if a God-Blood does not encounter the person for a number of days equal to his Appearance, but it returns once the acquaintance is renewed. God-Blood characters must have an Appearance Attribute of 3 or more to take this mutation, and some magical beings (chosen at the Storyteller's discretion) are indifferent to such eerie perfection.

Twisted Sense

A God-Blood with this mutation finds that one of his five senses operates strangely. The change is not necessarily crippling, but it is often distracting or inconvenient. For example, one God-Blood might see every color as shades of blue, while another might find that normally pleasant smells seem foul and unpleasant ones smell sweet. This effect might occasionally be useful, but it will more often make it harder for characters to deal with their environment as it actually exists.

A character may take this mutation multiple times, but each time it applies to a different sense. There is a limit to how much one can change sensory input before it begins to take its toll, however. God-Blooded with three of more Twisted Sense mutations suffer a one-die penalty on all dice rolls relating to fine perception. They will still see an enemy attacking them directly, but they might miss one hiding nearby. God-Blooded who have twisted versions of all five senses increase this penalty to two dice.

Visible Caste Mark (Half-Castes Only)

Half-Caste God-Blooded do not usually display the caste marks of their Exalted parents. Characters with this mutation are the exception. They have a faint caste mark that appears whenever they channel Essence or use their mutations actively. Passive uses of mutations, such as with those that provide armor and the like do not cause the mark to appear.

Those familiar with the Exalted note that Half-Castes' marks do not appear the same as their parents. They are paler and glow very faintly. This distinction is lost on the Wyld Hunt and most other enemies of the Anathema, who will treat any Half-Caste in much the same way they will full Exalts.

Debilities

Behavioral Archetype

God-Blooded with this mutation possess personality traits and minor mental instabilities often associated with their sires. Demon-Bloods are cruel and deceitful, Ghost-Bloods detached and morose, Fae-Bloods erratic and eccentric, and so on. This mutation stops short of true madness or serious mental illness, but it makes a character somewhat predictable and, at times, difficult. Other characters who are aware of these tendencies and try to use them to manipulate a God-Blood receive a two-die bonus on all rolls to do so, including social combat.

Demon/Spectre Meat (Demon-Blooded and Ghost Blooded Only)

This mutation causes a God-Blood to exude a faint aura or scent that attracts demons (for Demon-Blooded) or ghosts (for Ghost-Blooded). A successful (Perception + Occult) roll at difficulty (6 – the character's Essence) allows such creatures to sense the character's presence from up to a mile away. Hungry ghosts and less intelligent demons will track the God-Blooded and attempt to devour him if possible. More intelligent ghosts and demons can act as they desire. Since every health level of blood or flesh from the character grants three motes of Essence and is useful in some rare rituals, however, even the more reserved denizens of the Underworld and Malfeas might attempt seek him out.

Involuntary Medium (God-Blooded, Demon-Blooded and Ghost-Blooded Only)

This mutation is the flip-side of Possession Immunity (see p. 134). Supernatural beings gain one bonus die when using Charms or powers in an attempt to possess a God-Blood who has this mutation. Beings of the same type as the character's parent (demon, ghost or spirit) also gain an automatic success on these rolls.

Oathsworn

This mutation changes the God-Blood's very nature so that she cannot make false oaths or promises. She can lie or casually deceive but she cannot give a solemn oath then go back on it. If she does break such an oath, the God-Blood suffers the same effects as if she had broken a contract sanctified by an Eclipse Caste Exalt (see **Exalted**, p. 100).

This mutation is most commonly found among the Fae-Blooded, who have inherited their parents' affinity for binding oaths. It occasionally manifests in God-Bloods of other sorts, however, particularly those whose parents are involved with law or contracts, such as Eclipse Caste Solars or the demonic priests of Cecelyne.

Unnatural Being (God-Blooded, Demon-Blooded, Fae-Blooded and Ghost-Blooded Only)

God-Blooded with this mutation are inhuman on a level different from their peers. Most God-Bloods are just mortal enough that they can avoid mystical boundaries and other limitations that affect their parents. This is not the case with God-Blooded who possess this mutation. Their very bodies are affected by wards and bindings that usually affect only their parents.

Demon-Blooded whose possess Unnatural Being can still leave Malfeas at will, but the trip is painful and discomforting. Until they have crossed Cecelyne and re-entered Creation, increase the difficulty of all die rolls made for them by one. God-Blooded also suffer the same penalties in places or environments that harm or limit their parents, such as an active volcano for water spirits or the halls of Yu-Shan for ghosts or demons. Half-Castes cannot take this mutation.

Deformities

Beast Form (God-Blooded, Demon-Blooded and Fae-Blooded Only)

The God-Blood has undergone a drastic change and now appears as an animal. The character might look like a normal animal or some sort of strange hybrid, but he is clearly no longer human. This mutation is rare and is usually found only among God-Bloods whose divine parents were animal gods, though there have been instances of blood-ape offspring who resemble primates, Fae-Bloods shaped like hunting hounds

and the like. Half-Castes and Ghost-Blooded do not manifest this mutation.

This mutation grants all the logical limitations of the new form. A God-Blood who appears as a hound-like beast, for example, could not use tools or weapons, and any armor would have to be specially made. Any advantage to the form (such as fangs, claws, wings, et cetera) must be bought as positive mutations. Many mutations listed in the **Exalted** core book (pp. 288–290), **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld** (pp. 144–148) and **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars**, (pp. 206–209) are suitable for such purposes. If the animal shape is roughly human and can use weapons and tools—such as a God-Blooded who appears as an ape-like beast—this mutation is treated as a debility instead. Yet, even forms such as these cannot use tools and weapons made for human hands easily, and they suffer a one-die penalty on all rolls to do so. Characters can have tools and weapons made that counteract this penalty. Such items cost one dot more in Resources than normal, however.

Note that this mutation can be used to create a God-Blooded character who is the offspring of a supernatural being and a mortal animal. This is not the normal manifestation of this mutation, however, and players should receive Storyteller approval before making such a character. Players wishing to have a character who can take an animal-like form at will should consider God Body instead, perhaps with additional positive mutations that have the Limited Manifestation deficiency so that they apply only when the God-Blooded is in that form.

Denizen of Beyond (Demon-Blooded, Fae-Blooded and Ghost-Blooded Only)

A character with this mutation has found that her supernatural nature has eclipsed her mortal blood so intensely that she wastes away in Creation. If she is not in a location where she can regenerate Essence, such as a shadowland for a Ghost-Blood, she actually loses Essence motes from her pool at the rate of one mote per day. Once the character's pool is depleted, she loses permanent Essence at the same rate of one per day. Upon reaching an Essence rating of 0, the character dies. God-Blooded capable of draining Essence from living creatures can stave off these effects by feeding each day. Permanent Essence lost in this fashion returns at the rate of one dot per week that a character stays in an area where she can regain Essence naturally. Characters suffering from this deformity cannot use stunting to stave off these effects, though they can regain Essence so long as it does not raise their pool over the current reduced maximum imposed by the effects of this mutation.

The Great Curse (Half-Castes Only)

One of the few advantages Half-Castes have over their parents is that they are not subject to the Great Curse. They have Virtues but do not generate Limit and do not have a Virtue Flaw. Half-Castes with this mutation have no such advantage, however. Instead, they suffer the Great Curse in the same ways as their Exalted parents.

Too Human

God-Blooded with this mutation have a mortal nature that outweighs their supernatural parents' influence. They appear more mundane and have difficulty channeling Essence as effectively as other God-Bloods. To reflect this, the character must spend two additional Essence motes to active any Charms she knows or use any powers that requires Essence expenditure. One benefit of this mutation is that characters with it tend to have less obvious physical changes stemming from other mutations. This will not mean that a God-Blood with horns and wings will be able to pass as human, but it does make him a bit harder to spot in a crowd if he takes steps to conceal himself (a one-die bonus to such efforts).

Walking Blasphemy (Demon-Blooded Only)

Demon-Bloods with this mutation possess an infernal nature that cannot be denied or ignored. This inherent corruption seeks to lash out and destroy any consecrated or holy objects within three yards. This occurs on a character's next action after coming into the presence of such a target but does not interfere with the Demon-Blood taking other actions. This attempt is not optional, and it costs one temporary Willpower. The Demon-Blood's player rolls (Inheritance + Essence) with a difficulty determined by the power and significance of the object. Normal holy relics are difficulty 3, while ancient relics of the Unconquered Sun might go as high as difficulty 10. Stunting can be applied to this roll if appropriate. If the roll succeeds, the object is corrupted and shatters, burns or is otherwise destroyed. Failure means the object survives and another roll must be attempted on the character's next action. Demon-Blooded who wish to avoid draining their Willpower in the face of potent holy relics they cannot destroy must withdraw to more than three yards away from the object.

In addition to the main effects of this mutation, a Demon-Blood possessing it can be detected or tracked with powers and Charms that normally work only on full demons.

Wandering Po/Walking Nightmare (Ghost-Blooded and Demon-Blooded Only)

Wandering Po and Walking Nightmare are two mutations that manifest in very similar ways. When a

character with this mutation sleeps, a hungry force tears itself free. For the Ghost-Blood, this is her po in the form of a hungry ghost. For the Demon-Blood, it is an infernal spirit that reflects the inherent corruption that dwells within him. In either case, this sinister alter ego has all of the character's traits with the following exceptions: Intelligence is halved, Charisma and Manipulation are reduced to 1, it soaks lethal damage with its full Stamina, and it grows claws (Speed 5, Accuracy +1, Damage +1L, Defense +2) and fangs (Speed 6, Accuracy -1, Damage +3L, Defense -2). Once free, the creature stalks and kills humans, animals and any other available targets. This dark half of the God-Blood is not particularly smart, but it does possess a fair amount of animal cunning. It might attack from ambush or employ trickery to isolate tempting targets from their companions. The creature is smart enough not to attack a well-armed force or clearly superior foe, though it can be tricked into doing so. Physically, the creature resembles the host somewhat, but it is twisted and inhuman. The difficulty of (Perception + Awareness) rolls to recognize a God-Blood from his Wandering Po/Walking Nightmare form is 3.

The hungry ghost version of this mutation can be warded by salt or talismans. It can be slain with sunlight or weapons, but it will rise again the next night as long as the Ghost-Blood lives. The infernal version can be fended off by holy relics and wards that affect demons. It too can be slain by weapons, though sunlight does not harm it. It can be banished with the proper spells as if it were a demon. It too cannot be permanently destroyed as long as its host lives.

A God-Blood who has either version of this mutation might not know of her curse. She might go to sleep every night unaware she about to unleash a monster. She might even feel driven to hunt this mysterious creature that seems to slay innocents and devour mortals wherever she travels. Those who learn the truth can sleep surrounded by rings of salt or within protective wards. Ghost-Bloods can keep their po from emerging by sleeping during the day. Demon-Bloods do not have this option, but certain prayers and benedictions can have a similar effect. Unfortunately, the dark force inside the character will not long tolerate this treatment. It drains the character of one temporary Willpower for every night it is not allowed to emerge. This Willpower cannot be regained until the creature is released. If the character's Willpower is reduced to 0, she takes no precautions when she next sleeps, meekly accepting her curse. During this emergence, the Wandering Po or Walking Nightmare is especially active, and the character will wake to face all the carnage and pain her inner nature caused while she slept.

Variable Mutations

Crippled Essence

Much as some God-Blooded have more of their supernatural parents' power running through their veins, others have less. Characters with this mutation have fewer Essence motes than their base Essence pool. The exact amount less is determined by the level of the mutation: A deficiency results in three fewer Essence motes, a debility six and a deformity 12. No level of mutation can reduce the Essence to below 0, and no other mutations will manifest that cannot be powered by the amount of Essence remaining in the character's pool.

Erratic Temperament

This mutation most frequently manifests in Fae-Blooded, but all God-Bloods can carry madness in their Essence-infused blood. A character with this mutation changes his personality drastically at semi-regular intervals due to his supernatural nature warring with his mortal mind. These personality shifts might be true multiple personalities or drastic ideological shifts, but they are extreme and potentially dangerous. Hate can turn to love, or submission into rebellion under the influence of this mutation. The severity of the mutation determines how quickly these changes occur. With a deficiency, changes occur once each full moon. With a debility, it happens once every five-day period. With a deformity, the character goes to bed every night with one mindset or personality and wakes with another.

Each time this occurs, the player should reassign the character's Motivation and Intimacies to reflect the new changes. A Storyteller wishing the effects of this mutation to sting a bit more might reassign some of the character's Intimacies herself. This can be very enjoyable if the player is amenable to the idea, though she should take care not to render the character no fun to play.

Natural Enmity

As if life weren't hard enough for most God-Blooded, some carry a mutation in their blood that creates natural animosity among certain creatures. This mutation is always linked in some way to their supernatural parents' background. This relation can be general or personal. For example, the daughter of a ghost might inspire revulsion in animals simply because of her Half-Dead nature, but a son of a the Lord of the Nine Rivers might create loathing in the demon spawn of the Quarter Prince, Octavian, because of his father's victory over the demon warlord.

Creatures who have a Natural Enmity with the character are assumed to be automatically hostile toward him by default. Certain individuals might have personal reasons for not feeling this way, but the vast majority of them simply go with their instincts and decide the God-

Blood is a threat, a villain or generally up to no good. This mutation increases the difficulty of all social rolls with the subject of the Natural Enmity by two. The negative feelings this mutation generates are supernatural in origin, and even if they are overcome by heroics or persuasion, they do not disappear. The God-Blood will always put the target creatures on edge on some instinctual level, even if they choose to ignore those impulses.

The severity of the mutation determines the size and general power of the group in whom the God-Blood inspires hostility. Deficiencies indicate a Natural Enmity with a relatively focused group that is generally less powerful than the God-Blood (such as a certain breed of animals or a certain class of mortals). Debilities affect either a larger less powerful group (such as all mortals or animals) or a more focused powerful group (such as earth elementals). Deformities involve a larger powerful group (such as elementals or demons).

Note that simply because these creatures dislike the God-Blood does not mean they will necessarily attack or even harass him. They just naturally don't like or trust him. This does suggest that some individual creatures will attack the character when the opportunity presents itself, but this is not universal. Also, fortunately for the God-Blood, really powerful creatures (double the character's Essence or more) will generally just ignore the character unless he starts something first. Sure, they'll be really rude and dismissive. They might even make a point of reminding the God-Blood how insignificant he is to them, but they aren't likely to harm him—permanently, at least. This mutation is meant to be an inconvenience, not a death sentence.

Vulnerability

This mutation renders the God-Blood particularly vulnerable to a substance that is not normally harmful to humans. This normally manifests in Fae-Blooded, who are generally vulnerable to cold iron, but other God-Bloods sometimes inherit similar vulnerabilities from their parents.

The severity of the mutation determines the level of harm contact with the substance causes. A deficiency means that the substance is an irritation and adds one to the difficulty of all actions when it touches the God-Blooded. A debility means that weapons of this substance inflict aggravated wounds to the character. A deformity causes such extreme pain and harm that the character takes one die of aggravated damage per five ticks (or five seconds out of combat) during which he remains in contact with the substance. These effects stack, so that

Using Mutations from Other Books

In addition to the mutations listed in this chapter, players of God-Blooded can select mutations from **Exalted** (pp. 288–290), **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld** (pp. 144–150), **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals** (pp. 62-64) and **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars** (pp. 206–210). With the exception of Fae-Blooded and beastmen, these mutations are not a product of Wyld energies when they appear in God-Blooded, but they function mechanically in the same way. For example, a Demon-Blooded who possesses Claws/Fangs due to his infernal heritage still inflicts lethal damage with his bites and hand attacks as if he possessed the Wyld mutation of the same name.

Some mutations are generally more appropriate to certain types of God-Blooded than others. Suggestions for which mutations are most commonly found among the God-Blooded of the various types include:

Demon-Blooded: Various physical and mental mutations that suggest the violent and alien nature of demons, such as Claws/Fangs, Wings, Mood Swings and the like. Many Demon-Blooded possess the Diet debility with a focus on everything from human flesh to songs of loss and anguish. In addition, all mutations provided in **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Infernals**, pages 62-64, are specifically for use with Demon-Bloods.

Fae-Blooded: Any, though mutations suggesting extreme ugliness or infirmity, such as Atrophy, Ugly or Plague Carrier, are uncommon. Mutations suggesting emotional instability such as Mood Swings or Delusions are quite common.

God-Blooded: Any that suggest the God-Blood's spirit or godly parent. A son of a river spirit, for example, might have Gills or Fish Scales, but is unlikely to possess Wings.

Ghost-Blooded: Various mutations that suggest death and decay. Claws/Fangs, Skin/Hair Color (deathly pallor), Atrophy and Decomposing are common.

Half-Caste: Minor cosmetic poxes and deficiencies are common. Emotional and mental mutations are also widespread. Massive physical mutations are generally not common.

Beastmen: Any. Although they are technically Half-Castes, beastmen's unique nature means that their common mutations are listed separately. This is because animal traits and extreme physical mutations are far more common in beastmen than in their Half-Caste cousins. Also, the Wyld Addiction debility is nearly unheard of in all but Fae-Bloods and beastmen, since God-Blooded's mutations are a product of their parentage and not the chaotic energies of the Wyld. More information on beastmen can be found in **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld**, pages 157–160.

It is also worth noting that many of the mutations listed in this book are suitable for use when creating Wyld mutants. As a rule, those mutations limited to certain types of God-Blooded are inappropriate, but many others can be found among the strange and twisted beings who roam the Wyldlands.

a deformity-level Vulnerability results in a difficulty penalty, aggravated wounds and aggravated damage from prolonged contact.

Mutation and Appearance

Many mutations already alter a character's physical appearance as part of the benefits or disadvantages they confer. This is particularly true of more powerful mutations or those that grant things such as claws and armor. Yet, even other types of mutations can have physical manifestations. Many God-Blooded stand apart from mere mortals, even those who generally appear normal. Even changes to a God-Blood's mind can result in the character developing mannerisms or slight physical changes. The most extreme of these changes are themselves mutations, though more subtle changes are common and often overlooked by those who don't know what they are looking for.

When creating God-Blooded characters, players should consider these possible physical changes. In many cases, these minor quirks and alterations will have no mechanical effect in the game, but they can help further define a character and might give inspiration for stunts. For example, a player might decide that her Solar Half-Caste's Essence Abundance mutation also means that the character has golden eyes that almost seem to shine with power. He might, then, be able to work an effective description of this trait into a stunt involving intimidating or captivating a mortal who worships the Lawgivers.

Like many aspects of character creation, thinking about and describing a few of these appearance changes requires little time or effort and can give players a better idea of their characters. What's more, these ideas can help Storytellers in running their games, such as by being able to drop a hint to a player that she's met her character's long lost brother by describing his similar golden eyes.

Creating New Mutations

Although the list of God-Blooded mutations in this book is extensive, it is far from exhaustive. Storytellers and players might want to create new mutations for God-Bloods in their games. This is not only possible, but it is also encouraged. There are few factors to consider when crafting these new mutations, which are discussed in this section.

Step One: What Does the Mutation Do?

Before attempting to assign game mechanics to a mutation, the player working with her Storyteller (or the Storyteller himself) should decide exactly what the mutation is. Does it change the God-Blood's mind? Her body? Is it linked directly to a supernatural parent's ability, or is it a freak anomaly? How does it manifest, and what does it add to the character either in the form or increased power or interesting complications?

Once these questions have been answered, it is time to create the mechanical effects of the mutation. Lesser positive mutations have slight effects, such as adding small dice bonuses or granting lesser animal traits to the character. Lesser negative mutations give minor penalties or make a character seem less human in small ways. Greater mutations either have greater effects or affect a large number of related traits. Storytellers should look at the mutations here and in other books such as the **Exalted** core (pp. 288–290) for examples on which to model their own created mutations.

Step Two: What Are the Side Effects?

Few mutations in **Exalted** are completely one-sided. Many have logical side effects that create problems or provide small advantages. Not all of these effects have a direct mechanical effect, but they all change the characters with the mutation in some way. These changes are not always negative. Minor physical mutations might mark a character as inhuman, but in the fantastically strange world of Creation, this is not a terrible thing.

For example, God-Blooded with the Immortality mutation are pretty lucky on the surface. They will live forever, barring violent death or disease. Yet, they will also see their own children, loved ones and even hated enemies age and die before them. Also, they are not true immortals and must avoid violence or risk ending their potentially unlimited lives. What does it mean to such a character to risk his life or fall in love?

These are the types of questions Storytellers and players should ask before creating new mutations. As a rule, the weaker the mutation, the smaller the side effects; the more powerful the mutation, the more dramatic the side effects. That said, expensive mutations that cost or provide a large number of bonus points generally have few downsides.

Step Three: Set the Price

No power is free, and (at least in **Exalted**) no terrible things afflict a character without some benefit. Storytellers should look at the effects and side effects of a new mutation and decide what category it fits under. The first decision is relatively easy: whether the mutation is negative or positive. Deciding what exact type of mutation it is within those larger categories can be a bit trickier. It is recommended that Storytellers and players experiment a bit with different versions of a possible mutation until they get the hang of designing them. In any case, players attempting to design their own mutations should get their Storytellers' approval before bringing a new mutation into an **Exalted** series.

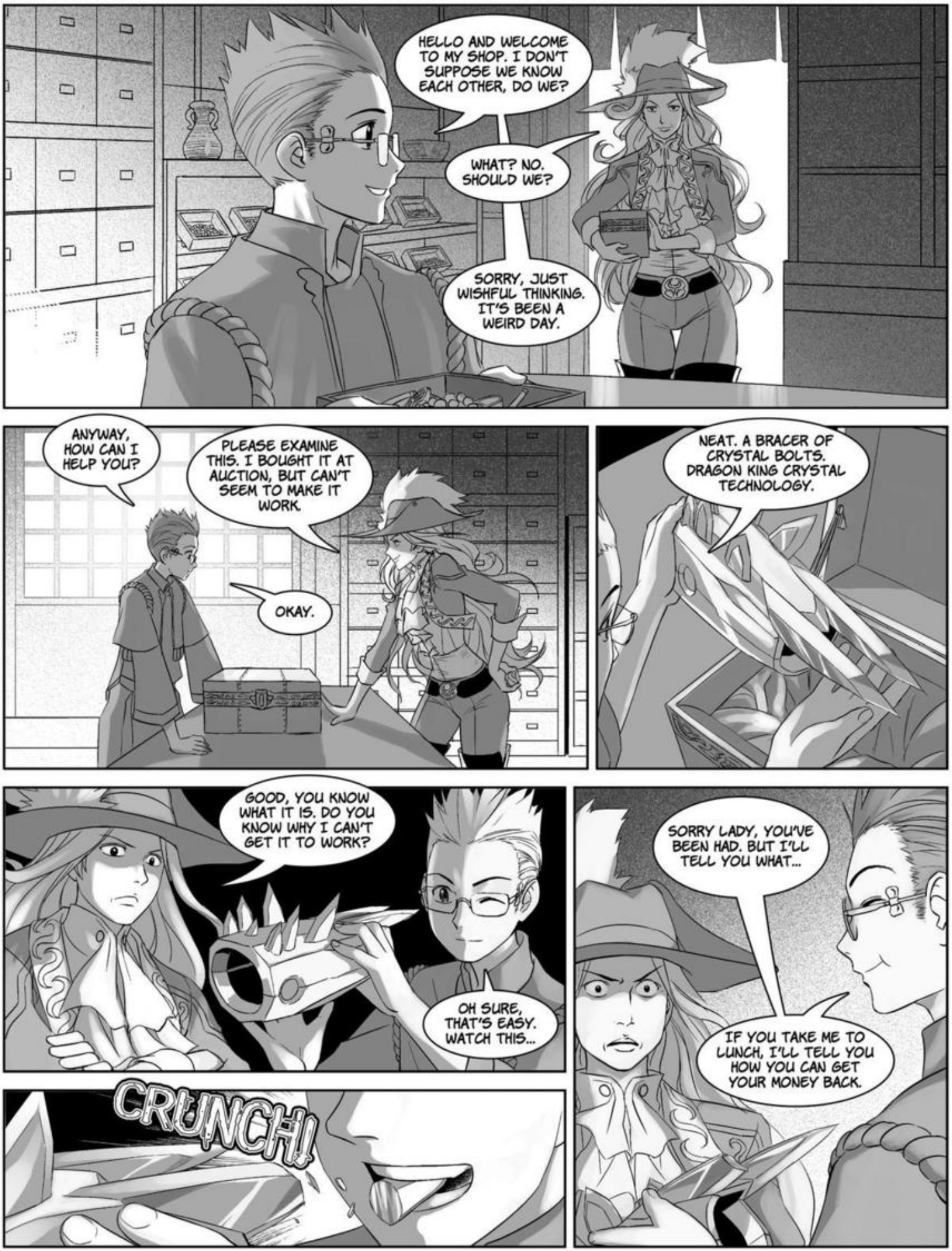
Final Words on Playing God-Bloods

God-Blooded hold a unique place in **Exalted**. They are neither god nor human, Exalt nor heroic mortal. Their might is eclipsed by that of most of the Chosen, but they far surpass mortal heroes simply by virtue of their half-breed nature. They are neither the most favored of the servants, followers and children of the gods nor the most ignored. They are the troubled middle children of Creation.

This doesn't mean that all God-Blooded are miserable half-breeds or even that most feel unhappy with their lot in life. Many are quite content to serve their parents or wander about in search of their own destiny. They have superhuman powers, successful families and often a string of admirers, servants and lovers. Some even have cults devoted to them, though most are associated with the faiths that spring up around their magical sires.

Admittedly, the norm differs somewhat between heritages. Demon-Blooded tend to be less content and more abused than God-Blooded or Half-Castes. Fae-Blooded might lead lives of passion and wild adventure, but they also live with the fear that one day their alien parents will simply devour them out of boredom. Half-Castes might be cherished, but they live in the eternal shadow of their Exalted sires. And Ghost-Blooded are useful to the Underworld but always looked at a bit strangely because they haven't yet had the decency to die.

Players of God-Blooded characters should consider all of these factors when roleplaying their characters. Are their God-Bloods happy with their heritage or ashamed? Are they stalwart champions of their magical parents or half-breed vipers waiting for the opportunity to strike? Are they interested in ascension, or do they secretly (or not so secretly) despise their magical half? How do they get along with others of their kind? This last question is perhaps the most important because it is often other God-Blooded who form the greatest allies and companions the characters have.


HELLO AND WELCOME TO MY SHOP. I DON'T SUPPOSE WE KNOW EACH OTHER, DO WE?
WHAT? NO. SHOULD WE?
SORRY, JUST WISHFUL THINKING. IT'S BEEN A WEIRD DAY.
ANYWAY, HOW CAN I HELP YOU?
PLEASE EXAMINE THIS. I BOUGHT IT AT AUCTION, BUT CAN'T SEEM TO MAKE IT WORK.
OKAY.
NEAT. A BRACER OF CRYSTAL BOLTS. DRAGON KING CRYSTAL TECHNOLOGY.
GOOD, YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS. DO YOU KNOW WHY I CAN'T GET IT TO WORK?
OH SURE, THAT'S EASY. WATCH THIS...
CRUNCH!
SORRY LADY, YOU'VE BEEN HAD. BUT I'LL TELL YOU WHAT...
IF YOU TAKE ME TO LUNCH, I'LL TELL YOU HOW YOU CAN GET YOUR MONEY BACK.

CHAPTER SIX
STORYTELLING

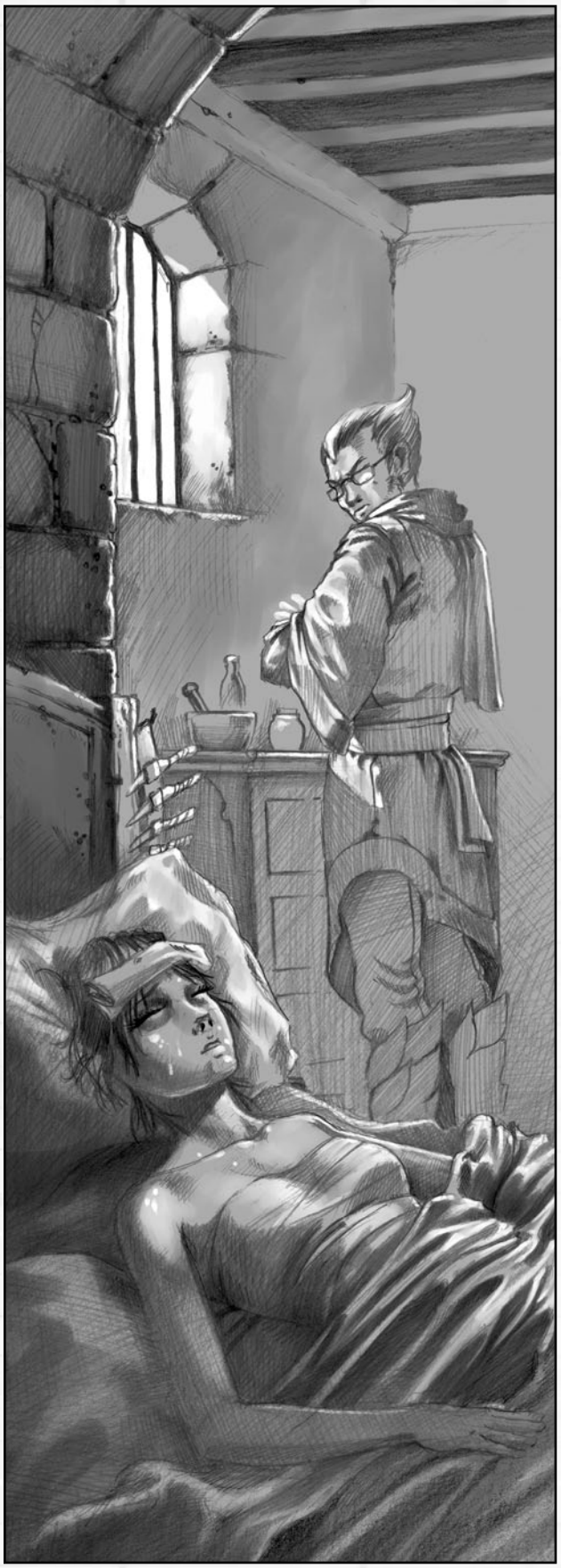
On the distant battlefields of Creation, epic heroes fight and die, waging war while shining like the sun and moon. In a far-off bedchamber adjacent to the Imperial Manse, a mostly dead youth with skin like ice prepares to make love to a centuries-old demigoddess of the earth. In a courtroom in Heaven, a divine barrister delivers an impassioned closing argument, defending crimes she knows her fellows committed to a jury of skeptical gods. Across Creation, beyond it and outside it, heroes surpassing mortal ken deny the odds and make their own destiny.

But not all heroes are so lucky, blessed and fortunate. The idle passions of the Chosen affect the lives of millions of mortals, and few of their crimes are brought to justice in any courtroom, much less a divine one. The bed of the demigoddess has been shared by many a slave girl fearing the fate that awaits her at dawn's light. And on that lonely battlefield, the fatally injured soldier sighs as he spots his star in the House of Endings.

Mortals in the Age of Sorrows are constrained by destiny and bereft of special wisdom or supernatural might, trying to survive as best they can in a time of warring heroes. **Exalted** was crafted as a game of epic heroes—people with ambitions and abilities beyond those of mortal men. Yet, all of those heroes were mortals once, and Exalt and mortal alike must choose whether to rise to defend their ideals or merely seek to survive.

The Games of Mortality

It's a valid question—why play mortals when the name of the game, after all, is **Exalted**? The Primordials designed humans to be fragile and easily killed, reasoning that a near-constant fear of death would inspire ecstatic devotion and fervent prayer. The ten thousand gifts bestowed upon Exaltation render mortal concerns nearly irrelevant within a few scant decades. Of course,



to mortals, those concerns are paramount, and the world-shaping power of the Exaltation permanently affixes the focus of the Exalt on the entirety of Creation. That's not to say it's *impossible* for Exalts to focus on small matters, but their heroic Motivations typically drive them to do great things for all Creation, not just for a small or select group. Possessed of vast supernatural power, they have little to truly fear. This long, wide view lends itself to sweeping and epic tales, but it leaves little room for certain types of stories that mortals (by virtue of *not* having world-altering might) can play much more easily. Ideally, a game about mortals is one played by an experienced group and a Storyteller well versed in **Exalted**'s milieu and mechanics.

Children of Earth are not terribly suitable for players' characters, and why would they be? **Exalted** is a game of cinematic action and epic tragedy, not a strangely compelling farming simulation. Heroes, however, enable a group to see Creation through an entirely different lens.

True Grit

Combat and life for the un-Exalted mortal is *gritty*, for lack of a better word. Brutal and hard, the battles of the un-Exalted have none of the sweeping grandeur of the Chosen. Mortal battles are fought in seedy, violent cities beneath an uncaring sky. Wounds heal only with time, not with the application of post-scuffle Charms. The combatants are cut, the combatants bleed, and the only light within them is the fury in their eyes. An alleyway mugging becomes a life-and-death struggle if the thief gets a lucky strike in. Every seduction of a waitress in a teahouse, every bargain struck in the markets of Chiaroscuro, every new day lived in the Age of Sorrows becomes a victory over the forces of entropy, annihilation and change that pervade the setting. Tasks that are easy for the Exalted—battling way through a corrupt magistrate's elite guards, for example—must give heroic mortals pause. In order to accomplish their goals, heroic mortals must be as smart, lucky and subtle as the Chosen, and perhaps far more so, for they cannot fall back on brute force if the situation demands it.

Players who wish to see the sad, fallen state of Creation are confronted with it easily enough with a mortals play style. A disease that plagues a region, for example, can no longer be cured by a Charm and a touch. Moral decisions become harder for characters to make when they don't necessarily have the muscle to back it up. Do the characters rob from the corrupt magistrate to give jade to the poor, when they're not the greatest thieves in Creation? Should they rush headlong into the trapped manse of the mad thaumaturge to save the city? Do they intervene when a slave is beaten by his master in the marketplace, heedless of the well-armed

and -armored guards standing nearby? Do they pursue their rival heedless of their own wounds, for the chance to slay a foe once and for all? For the Exalted, these are no choices at all, and their Charms and artifacts will likely carry the day.

Of course, the characters can still be larger-than-life heroes. They can still achieve incredible stunts, defying the odds and reveling in their successes. Their personalities and Motivations can be as broad and nuanced as any Exalt's. But tasks that were literally effortless in previous games, such as scaling the walls of Whitewall, now become nearly insurmountable problems, to say nothing of thwarting a Deathlord when the ancient ghost can slay them with a look.

Smaller Motivations, Smaller Heroes

The Motivations of the Celestial Exalted impel them toward epic tasks such as abolishing the practice of slavery in Creation or restoring the air fleet of the Solar Deliberative or even re-establishing the Solar Deliberative itself. Even the Dragon-Blooded have broad goals, such as assuring the ascension of their House or healing the ailing Realm. Most mortals, on the other hand, tend toward more transitory, goal-oriented Motivations. It's not uncommon for a heroic mortal to be focused on a very specific task—a mercenary-turned-farmer whose family is murdered by an outcaste Dragon-Blood might vow to kill that particular enemy. Disparate Motivations can be difficult enough when dealing with a group of Exalts with incredible goals, but a character with a particular task in mind can be difficult to stop, let alone be expected to journey with the group's other characters away from the fruition of his life's goal. Some essential and temporal conflict causes a heroic mortal to alter his Motivation from the common "lead a good life" to something more suitable for play. It is recommended that a Storyteller establish harmony among the Motivations of the players' characters before play begins.

Freshmen Classics courses teach us that stories derive their structure from clashes of motivation. These motivations are often defined according to four different categories: mortal versus monster, mortal versus mortal, mortal versus nature, mortal versus self.

The Storyteller is responsible for generating most of these conflicts in the story. She acts as the natural world, as most of the monsters and as at least some of the other sentient beings in the world. The players are responsible for generating stories between and among their characters, creating memorable tensions between differing aspects of their personalities. A group of night watchmen in Gem can have just as nasty and tumultuous a group dynamic as a circle comprising Solars and Abyssals.

Small Horrors

The sheer invincibility of the Exalted lends them a sort of casual air toward mortality and horror. A disemboweling wound on an Exalt will heal within a few days, and a battle against an erymanthus is simply another case of an escaped demon being sent back to Hell. Without the benefit of mighty magical weapons from a bygone era or Essence-fueled defenses, the ravening blood-ape becomes a threat the entire group must deal with, with casualties sure to ensue. A highly visible but benign Wyld mutation—which never would have developed if the character possessed Integrity-Protecting Prana—makes a character an outcast for the rest of his life. A mortal stomach wound is cause enough to bid a tearful goodbye to an old friend before mercifully ending his delirious torment—unless the thaumaturge manages to call a disgusting stomach bottle bug into Creation to gleefully knit the victim's body back together from the inside. The casual brutality of the Solar Exalted in Limit Break or the spoiled natures of the Dragon-Blooded are enough to horrify most mortals (and players), to say nothing of the Abyssal or Infernal Exalted. Deciding how to put "the fear of Creation" into the players is a matter of some thought when dealing with characters who possess perfect defenses, but for mortals, their fragility lends itself to a game where fear pervades the setting.

Sword and (sort of) Sorcery

Heroic mortals are still *heroic*, with all the benefits heroism entails. They can perform stunts, they grow more powerful with experience, and they may command a fraction of the cosmic forces wielded by gods and Exalts. Although they tend to be more goal-oriented than the Exalted, mortals are conversely far freer. Mortal heroes go unnoticed by the great powers of the setting, and their adventures do not automatically give rise to vast armies led by ancient enemies. A group of freelance mercenaries (or "wandering adventurers" if you *must*) can have an enormous amount of fun within the setting. Games that involve playing the street-level members of the night watch of Gem become viable, whereas they'd be too insignificant for the gods' Chosen. Rather than leading the charge into the enemy ranks, the characters dash in behind a scintillating Dragon-Blooded hero. Teams of mortal heroes must rely on intricate coordination and division of labor in order to function effectively and defeat their foes.

Along the same vein, Creation is a highly diverse place, peopled with exotic societies and cultures, from the deferential and relaxed customs of An-Teng to the harsh, hybrid vigor of the miners living atop Mount Metagalapa. Exalts, by their nature, stir up trouble wherever they go.

Designed as semiautonomous, living superweapons, the Exaltation is forged for conflict, choosing people of singular focus and determination who leave societies and peoples radically altered by their very presence. Few Exalted are explorers by nature. Their chosen destiny is what lies at the end of their path in life. As a consequence, it's difficult to let a foreign society impact the *character* rather than the other way around. The Exalted find it easy to transform, but mortals cannot solve the problem of an overpriced teahouse by altering the local economy with an Excellency or a few Charms fueled by Essence. By contrast, mortals are free to journey about the setting, taking in the local culture of various societies without fear of utterly demolishing them in a pitched battle with the Wyld Hunt or a semi-random Berserk Anger Limit Break. Playing as mortals allows the players to have a grunt's view of the setting, the shaken rather than the shaker.

What Is This, a Museum Piece?

Mortal characters are certainly *capable* of changing the setting in permanent or even arbitrary ways. Since the players' characters are backed by the players themselves, this technically makes them the most important people in the world, for everything revolves around them. Aside from the players, many heroic mortals—from the founders of the Guild to the Perfect of Paragon—have transformed the setting in a dramatic manner. Every action the players' characters take can have a significant impact on the setting. Indeed, some elements of the setting—the burgeoning abolitionist sentiment simmering in the setting, for example—could benefit greatly from powerful mortal sympathizers. Mortals have a harder time making an impact on society than the Exalted do, however. Given a few days, an Eclipse Caste Solar with the right Bureaucracy and Socialize Charms can alter an entire capital city—and a significant part of the surrounding culture—in ways that will take months to sort out, and that's if the Exalt is taking it slow. Even the setting itself assumes that there are Exalts such as the Bull of the North out there, shaking up societies likes snow globes. It's far harder for a mortal to capriciously alter the setting than it is for an Exalt. Mortals still suffer the same trials and tribulations, but it's a matter of scale. A priest of the Cult of the Illuminated is hunted just as a Solar is, and a scavenger lord deals with the lost legacies of the First Age in the same manner an Exalt deals with a past life. But wandering mortal characters are much more likely to kick back and see the sights or fulfill their personal goals—and be treated like everyone else in the setting—than to wipe clean a nation's cultural slate and start anew. By all means, if your players' characters seek to address an indignity or injustice within the setting, allow them to pursue it. Be aware, however, that they have a very long struggle ahead of them, made that much harder by their mortality.

The Gunzosha's Choice

Despite being unable to master their own destiny or even their own Essence, mortals are not without distinct advantages. For instance, highly trained heroic mortals can act as force multipliers in mass combat, supplementing a Dragon-Blood (coordinating with War Excellencies, naturally) or God-Blood against a superior foe. A group of heroic special units can devastate an opponent's army, especially if equipped with magitech items and armor.

In fact, the most potent and feared commando units in Creation—the gunzosha of the Seventh Legion—are entirely mortal. Sealed in their powerful magitech armor, they sacrifice a vast amount of their life span for the ability to wage war on the same field as the Exalted. Amulets with arcane sigils are surgically implanted into the gunzosha during a risky procedure. They can remove only certain parts of their armor—as long as they live, the armor is always with them in some form. And few gunzosha ever live 15 years past their date of surgery. Yet, the gunzosha's choice is one many heroic mortals gladly make, burning the candle of life faster so that they may burn that much brighter. Despite a complete inability to approach the power and majesty of the Celestial Exalted, many heroic mortals accomplish amazing feats in their attempts to earn eternal glory. They cannot match the power of the Celestials, but they can approach the puissance of the weaker Dragon-Blooded, and they have magic all their own.

Characters who live a world away from Lookshy make the gunzosha's choice in other ways. Lesser ambitions must be the fuel that feeds the fire of Motivation. Even if they do not sacrifice their bodies and souls in the dramatic matter of the gunzosha, the choice is the same: to give up their lives to become great. A hero can have friends and lovers in a story, but they are either heroes in their own right (and potential rivals) or part of the home the hero leaves on the journey. Like the Exalted, heroes exist on a level above their so-called peers. Their only true comfort is found in the arms and camaraderie of their fellows, or at the home's hearth at the end of the series. All too often, that hearth lies cold and silent, for the path to glory and destiny is a lonely one that leaves little room for the pleasures the Children of Earth take for granted. A hero's life is never easy, and it's rarely one of luxury.

Enlightened Mortals

Even with the advantages granted by training, tactics and technology, heroic mortals are fundamentally limited

by their inability to perceive Essence and wield Charms. Some heroic mortals choose to simply soldier onward, either willfully unaware of the larger world or convinced that being a small fish in a small pond is in their lot in life. Others cannot content themselves so.

Besides their physical prowess and the capability to stunt, heroic mortals are also able to progress in their enlightenment and understanding of the wider universe—or, in mechanical terms, to increase their Essence ratings above 1. Such heroic mortals have an instinctual awareness of the invisible forces that surround them, an understanding that defies conscious thought. But with luck, skill or diligence, they can learn to unlock their hidden wellsprings of Essence to become truly enlightened mortals, capable of utilizing Essence in the world around them. Heroic mortals have several procedures at their disposal by which to become enlightened mortals.

Asceticism

A long regimen of yoga, meditation, solitude and limited diet—among stranger things—can enable an un-Exalted mortal to perceive and channel Essence. Besides the physical aspects of training the body to react in certain ways, these practices include koans, mantras, tantras and sutras to train the mind and spirit to react in a similar manner. These regimens take years to come to fruition and might not work at all times for all mortals.

Wyld Exposure

Exposure to the Wyld can cause the boundaries that bind a mortal's Essence within him to dissolve like so much candy floss. A technique called power-questing (see **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld**, p. 141) can be used in a deliberate attempt to acquire the Essence Channeler blight. It is certainly much hastier than fasting and prayer, which makes it more appealing to young daredevils and the foolhardy. It is also incredibly dangerous, for only an exceptional will can tame the Wyld, even for a short time.

Sheer Luck

On extremely rare occasions—and never with any sort of documentation or study conducted afterward—a mortal might find himself able to channel Essence without any explanation of why or how he was able to do so. Some mortals describe the sensation as an intense buildup over several days and weeks, culminating in a single jubilant release. Others find their ability to manipulate Essence stemming from a change in Motivation. Their change in attitude is extremely auspicious and lends the weight of destiny to their actions, granting them the ability to perceive and manipulate Essence. Regardless, heroic mortals have been known to become enlightened for no apparent reason.

To represent this change in mechanical terms, a Storyteller and player might simply wish to dispense with the quest to unbind the Essence within and allow the player to purchase the Awakened Essence Merit (see p. 59) for his character.

Magical Power

A Charm called Soul-Enlightening Beneficence allows the Solar Exalted to grant enlightenment to their lessers by forcibly shattering the bindings containing the heroic mortal's internal Essence. Solars, Lunars, Sidereals, Infernals, Abyssals and Alchemicals all possess a variation of this Charm. Spirits have access to a similar Charm, Touch of Divinity, that can provide the same benefit given time.

For the text of these Charms and more methods—thaumaturgical means, drugs and artifacts—by which a mortal may become enlightened, as well as Terrestrial martial arts styles, please see **Scroll of the Monk**, pages 17–20.

Thaumaturgy

Beyond simple strength in numbers—an advantage mortals have over even the Dragon-Blooded—heroic and enlightened mortals have the ability to master the arcane principles of thaumaturgy, minor miracles that draw upon the power inherent in the Essence of Creation to work their magic. Without the distractions of the greater power of Charms, mortals focus their efforts on improving their mundane skills and, in some cases, honing their abilities at thaumaturgy. During the Usurpation, even without the powers of sorcery, mortal thaumaturges loyal to the Dragon-Blooded successfully hindered even the mighty Solar Exalted. Although the effects of Creation may be harnessed without a full understanding of the power behind them, mortals who can perceive Essence have a far easier time controlling and using thaumaturgy. An enlightened mortal who has mastered the Arts of thaumaturgy may, for instance, be able to transmute lead into gold, summon and bargain with demons, build minor magical artifacts or summon hurricane gales and driving rain during a clear day. Even a No Moon Lunar capable of summoning titanic tentacles of magma or a Twilight Solar capable of bringing life and mineral wealth to a barren region can find a use for small miracles.

More details on thaumaturgy and its applications can be found in **Exalted**, pages 137–139, and **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**, pages 108–144.

Martial Arts

Enlightened mortals who have trained their bodies and martial skills to the peak of mortal perfection find they have the ability to touch what Sidereals call the Root of the Perfected Lotus, the lowest tier of supernatural martial arts.

Enlightened mortals must be taught by a similarly enlightened sifu but otherwise require no special initiation to be able to learn the Charms of the Terrestrial martial arts. Indeed, many of Creation's Terrestrial-level martial arts schools consist almost entirely of enlightened mortal practitioners.

Sorcery and Necromancy

For those mortals who have reached the pinnacle of their arcane power and are not content with thaumaturgy, methods exist with which to initiate the un-Exalted into the mysteries of Primordial Essence manipulation. Un-Exalted thaumaturges who reach the pinnacle of Occult knowledge and the height of their Essence may learn Terrestrial Circle Sorcery or Shadowlands Circle Necromancy, though not both. Such sorcerers and necromancers are forever constrained by their lack of Essence, denied the status accorded to those who have reached the pinnacle of their arts (that status is given instead to the Dragon-Blooded and the Ghost-Blooded). Still, both mortal sorcerers and necromancers can become ludicrously wealthy in a very short time using utilitarian spells. Most content themselves with the feeling that, among mortals, they are very big fish in a very small pond.

Destiny

What sets heroic mortals apart from the Exalted (aside from Exaltation) is the fact that destiny plays a major role in the lives of heroic mortals. Without the ability to channel vast amounts of Essence, most heroic mortals are forced to go along with whatever fate lies in store for them.

Experiencing Mechanical Difficulties

Storytellers who decide to run a mortals game—besides being strongly urged to make it a mortals-*only* game—must be aware of certain rules and constraints that come along for the ride. If you began playing **Exalted** using the Exalted, a number of rules that players take for granted change significantly for mortals. The Exalted, by virtue of their enhanced physiology, are simply not as susceptible to the aches and pains of mortal life. Some of the rules you need to watch out for are:

• **Order of Attack Events** (see **Exalted**, p. 145)**:** Mortals streamline Step 1 (declare attack), Step 2 (declare defense), Step 4 (attack reroll) and Step 9 (counterattacks), as they do not have Charms that enable them to function on those Steps. They may, of course, still stunt.

By Destiny Constrained

The overwhelming majority of mortals have no idea how fate and destiny function. The average mortal believes in the lies of other supernatural powers or has some vague inkling that the stars display the shape of Heaven's future plans. She is almost certainly not aware that destiny is written within a rather large structure in Yu-Shan. It requires either Lore •••• and a mastery of the Art of Astrology, or an appropriately targeted specialty for the average mortal to be aware of the Loom of Fate as anything more than a euphemism for the night sky.

Destiny rarely plays a major role in tales of the Exalted, save for the Sidereals, who are both masters and servants of that mysterious force. Mortals are another matter. A mortal's Motivation may be at odds with the doom Heaven has written in the stars for her—and mortals do not have inexhaustible reserves of Essence with which to shoulder aside Heaven's plans.

What heroic mortals do possess—in no lesser quantity than the Exalted—is heroism itself. While stunts might not smash apart destiny's flow the way Essence use does, they are still capable of nudging events to a margin of potential. Destiny is plotted in broad eventualities, with details left undecided until the moment of implementation. Certain martial arts, such as Falling Blossom Style (see **Scroll of the Monk**, pp. 43–45) and Path of the Arbiter (see **Scroll of the Monk—The Imperfect Lotus**, pp. 7–10), enable mortals to take a larger role in their fate, though nowhere near the level of the Exalted. Daring to pass through the wake of the world's greatest powers or direst enemies might help a hero avert her doom, and applying her every effort toward pursuing her dreams and goals might force a more favorable interpretation of what Heaven has decided for her.

Or perhaps not. Every mortal owes Saturn the same toll; she collects in the manner that pleases her more often than not. Everyone has a role to play.

• **Defense Values** (see **Exalted**, p. 146)**:** Except in rare occasions, heroic mortals do not have an Essence rating higher than 2 (though enlightened mortals do, almost without exception). Note also that heroic mortals round down in both their Dodge and Parry DV calculations. Their social defense values are unaffected, however.

• **Soak** (see **Exalted**, p. 149)**:** Mortals cannot soak lethal damage with half their Stamina rounded up, and they have no access to Charms or other supernatural means to improve their soak, unless something is taken using the Artifact Background. Instead, they have to rely on mundane armor, mutations, shields and sheer luck to not suffer immense damage.

• **Healing Rates** (see **Exalted**, pp. 148-149)**:** The Exalted have vastly accelerated healing rates, and all of the Exalted have their own methods of healing faster. Mortals do not.

• **Bleeding** (see **Exalted**, p. 151)**:** Blood is cinematic. Blood loss isn't. Unless a mortal has a staunch or compress on hand during a heated combat, multiple wounds will quickly result in a quiet, undignified death from loss of blood.

• **Infection** (see **Exalted**, p. 151)**:** The Chosen rarely have to worry about infection from lethal wounds, but for a mortal without access to medical treatment, a duel with blades in a lush rainforest might mean a painful death weeks later from hemorrhagic fever, even if he's the victor.

• **Disabling** (see **Exalted**, p. 152)**:** The Chosen do not suffer maiming injuries from massive injuries. Even targeted maiming injuries will heal back without scar or injury, effectively removing the Crippled keyword during natural healing. Mortals, however, have to worry about all of these.

• **Damage** (see **Exalted**, p. 150)**:** Due to the lack of an Ox-Body Technique Charm (or any other equivalent), mortals may never have more than seven health levels. Additionally, mortals do not have access to perfect defenses (or mote-powered defenses of any kind), leaving them incredibly vulnerable to singular, powerful blows.

• **Disease** (see **Exalted**, pp. 350-353)**:** As with everything else, mortals are far more susceptible to disease than the Exalted. Note especially the sidebar "Medicine in Exalted" (see **Exalted**, p. 353). Mortal doctors must devise complex and involved treatment plans and cannot simply touch and cure.

Game Styles

The main **Exalted** rulebook discusses a number of play styles (see **Exalted**, pp. 262–263), which are excellent suggestions for a Solar game but require major alterations for heroes lacking Exaltations. This section discusses how to adjust those styles for use with a mortals game and offers some expanded styles particularly applicable to the Chosen of No One.

Styles Remix

"Vanilla" Exalted does not apply terribly well to the un-Exalted regardless of flavor—the sort of high-fantasy

action demanded of the Chosen quickly leaves mortals bleeding out into the dirt and dust. Even an experienced thaumaturge finds it difficult to marshal the arcane energy that comes easily to the Exalted, and without supernatural backing, few will flock to his banner. But for a group of mortals who think small and dream big, great things are possible—after all, the Guild is a superpower, and the Exalted consider it virtually beneath their notice. Enterprising mortals who make themselves indispensable to a particular power of the setting, such as the Haslanti League, Halta or the Guild can become power players in these mostly mortal organizations. As their Backgrounds and influence grow, the inherent fragility of mortals lessens dramatically, with numerous groups maintaining an interest in the character remaining alive. And you need not miss out on cinematic action, just scale it down. A teahouse brawl becomes a life-or-death struggle, and a duel between rivals takes place in a field of grass rather than the head of the Penitent.

A Land Once Divided Must Unite is an interesting choice for mortals. Unable to command any sort of unnatural mental influence, mortals have to rely on sheer charisma, luck and skill to forge alliances throughout the setting. Travel becomes far more arduous and lengthy, as mortals simply cannot cover the same amount of ground as Exalts can. Fortune favors the bold and prepared, as your characters scheme to tighten their grasp over a larger area with an economic fist or a military one. A game set in the Hundred Kingdoms, without any sort of (overt) Exalted influence, can lead the characters into an intensely political game of thrones and treachery.

"And I'll Form the Head!" is difficult to pull off just anywhere in Creation, but in places that have a remnant of the glories of the First Age, even mere humans can shine in this play style. While mortals lack the command of Essence necessary to activate or control the technology of the First Age, they can be invaluable in maintaining that technology and taking key support roles in the massive battles that this play style encourages. A Lookshy-based game, for example, could have the players' character assuming the roles of shugan-junai (sorcerer-technicians) and gunzosha warriors, performing battlefield repairs on a damaged warstrider and fighting off the marauding hordes intent on murdering the wounded Dragon-Blooded pilot. The key to gaming with this play style is emphasizing the role of the cogs in the machine—a hero can fall and die with the battle continuing, but if the characters fail, the machine of war breaks down.

Outlander deserves its own section (see "Beyond the World"), as the lives of mortals are dramatically different outside Creation. Think long and hard before deciding on this play style. With the exception of the Blessed Isle and possibly Autochthonia, the other realms of existence are inhospitable *at best* for those without Charms.

Taking a Break from All Your Worries

This play style assumes that you have a standard, "stock" **Exalted** game, where you take on the roles of reincarnated epic heroes. Great! That's why the game was written!

At certain points in your narrative, you will find the players' characters coming to a significant portion of downtime. Celestial and Terrestrial Exalted need to spend months raising their Essence to a higher level of enlightenment, or the Circle is traveling a good distance across the world without a form of magical rapid transit. Perhaps real life has intruded slightly on the game, and one of your players has taken a sabbatical. Rather than call a hiatus or running the Mandate of Heaven (see the **Exalted Storytellers Companion**, pp. 129–156), consider running a mortals game of characters traveling throughout the setting, on a much slower trail directly behind the Exalted. Assuming your Exalted have been doing heroic things, this is a fantastic opportunity to examine in detail the ramifications of their actions within the setting. How have native cultures been transformed? What legends do they tell of the primary characters' deeds? The players get to see what legacy their characters have left behind, for good or for ill.

Beyond the World

Humanity has never been picky about where it attempts to settle, and human colonies exist in the most unlikely of locales, inhospitable though they might be. Most mortal games taking place in a different realm of the overall setting are dramatically different from a Creation-based game, even taking into account the heterogeneous nature of Creation. More information on the lives of mortals can be found in the respective Compass of Celestial Directions for each location, but a brief overview is given here for the benefit of Storytellers who wish to set their games in dangerous locales.

The Blessed Isle is home to the Scarlet Empire, which glorifies the Terrestrial Exalted, casting the millions of mortals on the continent into shadow. The mortal citizens of the Realm are much better off than Children of Earth anywhere else, but they find themselves locked into a rigid social hierarchy. Mortal heroes there find that, if you are not among the Exalted, you are a waste of the Realm's resources. On a thousand different levels, this sentiment pervades society, eating at the mortal spirit (and, perhaps not coincidentally, rendering Celestial Exaltations slightly rarer than everywhere else in Creation). Yet, some of the Scarlet Empire's mortals

can briefly consider themselves superior to the Exalted. A junior Dragon-Blooded officer can be remonstrated (albeit gently and with the utmost deference) by an elder mortal sergeant, while elsewhere, a newly Exalted Terrestrial might be undergoing instruction in etiquette and martial arts by an elder mortal Immaculate. And while a mortal cannot hope for Exaltation after his late teens, he may still slowly advance in status by "taking the coin or the razor"—joining the legions or the Immaculate Order—albeit at great personal risk. Ennobled mortals join the ranks of the patricians, and may yoke their family's destinies to that of the Dragon-Blooded.

The Wyld cannot be colonized for any serious length of time, but many mortals live in the Bordermarches, where the power of chaos intersects with the stability of Creation. Over time, Wyld exposure mutates these mortals, often leaving them slightly insane and with an array of edges over their fellow man (hence the wide variety of Wyld barbarians distributed throughout the Threshold). Those unlucky few with obvious mutations face ostracism and a life on the lowest social stratum, while some other mortals are blessed with strength, beauty and the ability to channel Essence thanks to the capriciousness of the Wyld. Within the deeper Wyld, the courts of the Fair Folk keep mortals for food and companionship, protecting them from the ravages of mutation in exchange for feeding on their very souls.

Yu-Shan is home to any number of mortals who serve the gods as priests and consorts. Although mortals cannot freely travel to Yu-Shan, the Heavenly City sees a brief influx of mortals each year during the Carnival of Meeting and every 25 years during the Heaven-and-Earth Invitational martial arts tournament. Since the early First Age, a number of exceptional mortals have been whisked to Yu-Shan during Calibration to feast with the gods and briefly experience all the delights of Heaven during the Carnival of Meeting. Only the vagaries of the little gods link the characters, so disparate mortals from all corners of Creation can suddenly find themselves in Yu-Shan, embroiled in divine plots and manipulated like game pieces. The Heaven-and-Earth Invitational admits only the best mortal martial artists to compete on the level of the Exalted for a shot at eternal glory. While none who return from the Invitational are willing to speak of the rules and conditions of the tournament, a number of mortals have won prizes there despite facing Exalted opponents.

The Underworld itself is not home to many mortals, though thousands live within the shadowlands in an uneasy co-existence with the dead. Those who do not live in a fully integrated society such as Skullstone often find themselves under the yoke of ancestor cults run by ancient ghosts. Still others are pressed into the service of the Deathlords, whether as spies able to interact in Creation or as soldiers. Mortals, the Deathlords muse, are better off dead, for their worth triples in death with each yielding a corpse that may be reanimated, a ghost and a hungry ghost. Most mortals in shadowlands are extremely unhappy with their lot in life but cannot leave. Some stay because of tradition, though, while others are compelled by the protection and prestige offered by the ancestor cults. Many are simply unable to conceive of life anywhere else.

Malfeas is naturally inhospitable to mortals, but that does not stop thaumaturges, slaves and akuma from living in the lair of the lion. The Demon City is a fantastic place of color, revelry and music, even as it exudes a torturous psychic presence and deadly miasma. Here, a summoner can cultivate a personal relationship with a demon, and a Yozi cult can enjoy direct patronage in exchange for worship, sacrifices and Essence.

Autochthonia is a place where mortals actually eclipse the Exalted in importance. While the Chosen of Autochthon act as heroes, icons and saviors of the people of the Eight Nations, mortals keep the Great Maker alive and in a state of functionality. They are born, they live, and they die in service to the Great Maker, with the few dissident Lumpen beneath the contempt of the vast majority of the population. For the mortals of Autochthonia, life exists as a triune entity, eternally shifting between work, relaxation and sleep. No escape is possible, but for most, living their lives in dual service to god and state, no escape has ever been considered. Freedom in large doses is bad—freedom promotes chaos, and chaos begets death and destruction. These are the facts in Autochthonia, taught to every mortal until the knowledge is as ingrained as breathing. Prolonged contact with Creation, however, will only result in growing unrest among the lower classes.

Mortals in Mixed Games

A single look at **Exalted** makes it clear that there are enormous power disparities even between the ranks of the Chosen. The gap between the lowly Dragon-Blooded and the mortals they rule is even greater. This presents a severe problem if someone wants to play a mortal in a mixed game. If Storytellers want to avoid that, the solution is simple: either run mortals-only games, or don't run mortals games at all. To make things clear: Mortals have no hope of outshining the Chosen in their areas of expertise. No mortal swordsman will ever upstage a Dawn Caste or a Chosen of Battles.

That said, mixed games can present great opportunities. The utility of mortal characters in mixed games is not to be found standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the

champions of the gods. Instead, mortals provide an excellent opportunity to showcase the way Exalts transform the lives they touch.

Sharing the Spotlight

Mortals are fragile. This is true in both a physical and narrative sense. If a player's mortal character is going to share the stage with Exalts, it is to everyone's benefit to coordinate their characters ahead of time. The best way for a mortal character to feel useful and valuable in a group of Exalted is to fill a niche of expertise none of the Exalts touch. For example, a former Lookshy ranger with great expertise in scouting and moving silently may be of use in a Solar Circle that lacks a Night Caste, but only as long as none of the Exalted decide to invest in becoming supernaturally stealthy and perceptive. For the slightly more than mortal, thaumaturgy almost always offers an excellent niche, as does lesser martial arts. The raw power of Exalted sorcery vastly outstrips such mortal magics, but they never lose their enormous range of versatility and usefulness. Additionally, a trained sorcerer-technician makes an adequate assistant in the constructions of minor artifacts. The mortal character could assist the Exalt in his or her duties. Similarly, a mortal martial artist may teach a lesser style—such as Golden Janissary (see **Scroll of the Monk**, pp. 48–50)—to the mortal followers of a Solar.

Big Heroes, Little Stories

Perhaps the greatest role for mortals in mixed games is that of supporting cast. This option is unorthodox and might not match the tastes of many players. Playing Watson or Wilson to another player's Holmes or House is not every player's cup of tea. Focusing on the story being told by the group *as a whole*, however, rather than the stories of its individual characters, can be immensely rewarding. If the player doesn't mind giving someone else the spotlight, he can magnify the coolness of another player's character many times over by providing a loyal character foil.

Solars are god-kings, ruling and inspiring in radiant glory—and they need subjects to rule, inspire and dazzle. Mortals flock to a Lawgiver's banner for any number of reasons and provide any number of services. Sample concepts include magitech engineers who service a circle's warstriders, bodyguards for the ethical Twilight who has no desire to enslave spirits, adoring cultists and agents who work to hide and protect the circle as it moves through Realm-controlled territory.

Lunars are mercurial beast-gods, savage and charismatic. Mortals are often the subjects of the Stewards' society-shaping efforts, but Lunars can find as much benefit from human companionship as any other Chosen. Mortals who associate with a Steward could be shamans, complicit in the Lunar's social engineering, who act as traveling go-betweens with the great moon-god who holds dominion over a region. Other alternatives include procurators who ferry information and goods from stable Creation to a Lunar's domain at the fringe of the Wyld, Wyld barbarians who act as a Lunar's fanatical death commandos or lovers striving for value as more than potential breeding stock.

Sidereals have the most difficulty integrating mortals into their stories. The Chosen of the Maidens pass through the world and are forgotten, so mortals who will become involved with Sidereals must generally be brought to where the Sidereals are. Such mortals generally live in Yu-Shan as the guests or lovers of a Sidereal Exalt, or they are transplanted members of the Vizier's family. Their ability to carry out Heaven's business without fading from memory makes them invaluable for certain situations, or so the Sidereals loudly proclaim when forced to justify themselves. In truth, such mortals might simply be a Sidereal's only enduring touchstone with the human race.

Dragon-Blooded vary greatly depending on their origins. Dynasts are extremely status-conscious and are strongly inculcated against casual relationships with their inferiors. They regard mortals as porters, servants, slaves and little more. But even elder Dynasts are surprised by the insights of the un-Exalted, who often have a greater idea of the true powers in the society by virtue of existing on the fringes. A peasant widow could shame an aged Air Aspect general just as easily as a fellow Exalted family member. Similarly, some rapport might be established in the Imperial Army between an officer and his soldiers. Military tales are also strongly suited to Lookshyan society, which promotes more casual social contact between its mortal citizens and the Princes of the Earth. Outcastes might decide to place themselves above the mortal stock from which they arose, but they don't have to. Mortals attach themselves to Terrestrial heroes in much the same sense as Solars and are often of greater use since the abilities of the Dragon-Blooded are not so vast.

Abyssals loyal to their appointed role as world-killing weapons have little use for mortals save as raw fodder. Skilled necrosurgeons or wicked murderers survive for a time as aides to deathknights, but their ultimate fate is sealed and likely not too far off in coming. Abyssals always have need of lieutenants, however, and a hero may learn necromancy and martial arts like any follower, aided by the Abyssal's incredible Neverborn-fueled power. Mortals in Abyssal stories are more likely subversive elements, desperately held by renegade or redemption-seeking Exalts as friends, companions and

lovers. This incidentally places such mortals in terrible danger—from the Abyssal's Dark Fate, from his spurned master and from his enemies. A hero willing to stand by an Abyssal through such trials, however, can play as central a role to a tale of redemption (or tragic failure) as the Exalt himself.

Infernals, like Abyssals, are newly arrived in Creation, charging forth into the Age of Sorrows with evangelical zeal. Mortal followers of Green Sun Princes are likely to be Yozi cultists, wholeheartedly believing in their newfound messiahs and the new era they promise to usher in. Such mortals support their lords as demon wranglers, helltech engineers, spies and high priests. And, ironically, mortals might well remind the Green Sun Princes of how disconnected from humanity both the Incarnae and the Yozis truly are, spurring a transhuman apotheosis.

Alchemicals are not like the rest of the Exalted, in a number of ways. Their relationship with mortals is not one of absolute rule. Mortals can play the familiar roles in an Alchemical game—sorcerer-engineer, field medic, soldier and so forth—but they can also be the social superiors of the Exalted in their midst. A mortal might be a general in command of an Alchemical assembly acting as special shock troops in his campaign or an explorer of Creation or the Far Reaches with a handful of Champions requisitioned to support his mission. Autochthonia presents interesting possibilities for role reversal and perhaps the greatest opportunity for mortals to shine on the same stage as the Chosen.

Endgame

Inevitably, every game must come to an end, but due to the fragility of mortals, the end of a mortals game can come more suddenly than most. Luck and destiny play important roles in the survival of mortals—even an intelligent, tactical player might suddenly find her character at the mercy of a few unlucky rolls, with no health levels or perfect defenses to ward off harm. The end of the series for that character is devoid of the drama appropriate to the culmination of the character's fate.

To combat this, Storytellers and players are encouraged to plan a finite conclusion to a mortals series, starting the story with a definitive goal in mind for the characters. Character death is inevitable, but heroic mortals tend to die much faster than standard **Exalted** characters. To relentlessly beat the dead horse: They have no mote-powered defenses, they are unable to wield powerful defensive weaponry, their armor is of crude quality, and they never receive more than the starting number of health levels. An unlucky roll here, a botch there, and the heroic mortal is now a heroic ghost. Even the Destiny Background, important as it is in the setting,

Legendary Familiars

Ancient myths speak of mortal heroes aided by far more powerful supernatural animal companions. Tales of a young warrior buoyed aloft by a winged horse existed alongside stories of a stalwart knight being advised by a dog gifted with the power of speech. Such myths are easily replicated within the setting of **Exalted**, where godly power is passed along with lineage and exceptional mortal heroes attract the notice of lesser gods. In essence, the Storyteller constructs a character using the God-Blooded template, and the player allies with the beast using the Familiar Background.

When designing a God-Blooded familiar, Storytellers are advised to assign the legendary animal a Familiar rating roughly equal to the Allies rating the familiar *would* have. For mortals, this usually means a rating of •••• or •••••. After the player spends the requisite Background points, the Storyteller should then construct the character according to standard God-Blooded creation rules, using the animal templates found on page 346 of **Exalted** as a rough guide. The familiar should possess the Beast Form deformity (see pp. 138-139). Such a companion might well be highly intelligent and capable of human speech in multiple languages, conversing with the player's character as a near equal. Inheritance and patron are primarily up to the Storyteller. A character accompanied by a horse-child of Hiparkes, for example, is a clear sign of the powerful god's favor. The familiar still acts as a familiar in every other respect, including providing an extra five motes to the mortal (assuming the mortal is capable of channeling Essence and regardless of the familiar's own Essence pool), the capability of sharing senses and telepathic communication. Storytellers should think long and hard before allowing this option into a game of mortality. The presence of a semi-divine character circumvents many of the challenges mortals face and can quickly become the focus of a game. Ideally, a character's Backgrounds should *remain* in the background.

does very little to protect mortals. There are exceptions, of course—a group consisting of gunzosha commandos is afforded a high degree of survivability—but these are exceptions, not the rule.

Besides planning a definitive end to the series, Storytellers should carefully gauge the strengths and weaknesses of a group before sending them into battle. Players might do well to have multiple back-up characters ready in case their primary characters are killed off mid-session.

Exaltation as an End

Perhaps the favorite way to end a mortals game is through Exaltation. The greatest honor and gravest responsibility a mortal in Creation can receive is the Second Breath; the characters have shown themselves to be individuals of exceptional bravery and supernal skill, and they have been rewarded handsomely. From here, though, your players' characters can no longer sit on the sidelines of Creation's societies, unable (or unwilling) to change things.

Trouble now clings to the newly Exalted like iron fillings to a magnet. They cannot remain mere watchmen in Gem and expect the city to stay quiet, nor can they sheepishly slink back to their hometowns and expect an uneventful life. For the rest of their existence, the characters live in interesting times. (Not even the Exalted of the First Age got more than a few years of peace and quiet.) They are, however, in luck. The Time of Tumult needs heroes of a proven caliber, and the characters will have plenty to do now that their responsibilities have been broadened considerably.

The Requirements of Exaltation

When he helped the gods design the Exaltation process, Autochthon imprinted the Exaltations with a set of protocols that would make sure that only those who desired the ability to change the world would be Chosen. In the broadest sense, Autochthon attempted to make sure that the mortals chosen by the Exaltations would be suited to their task of battling the Primordials. The Chosen have the seeds of their epic Motivation within them, but many adopt a life's goal only after their Exaltation, realizing that they now have the power to accomplish their dreams. Few Exalts are reluctant to wield their power, and those who are quickly adapt to their circumstances or perish.

Nearly every Celestial Exaltation requires that the mortal receiving it be singled out for a destiny in which he will perform heroic deeds. In mechanical terms, he must be a heroic mortal and have a Destiny Background rating of 3 (4 for Sidereal Exaltations). Storytellers who begin an extended mortals game with the intent to have the characters Exalt are encouraged to waive this requirement. The Celestial Exaltation rewrites this Destiny, causing a flurry of activity in the Loom of Fate and reducing the rating of the Background to zero, as the Chosen make their own destinies. This Destiny requirement, strangely enough, seemingly only applies to those mortals born within Creation itself. Mortals who

are nominally outside fate but connected to Creation through some esoteric gateway are capable of being gifted with a Celestial Exaltation provided they are heroic mortals who meet the proper standards. If a heroic mortal demonstrates immense capacity for heroism in the wake of an upheaval of Essence and a disturbance in the Loom (namely, a mortal caught in the wake of existing Exalts), he might well be gifted by Celestial Exaltation despite lacking the Destiny Background entirely. Lytek, God of Exaltation, has theorized that the Exaltation is attracted to the similar Essence signatures and deems the mortal worthy due to a heroic event outside the web of destiny. Like most of the god's conjectures relating to the Exaltation, however, he is unable to test for any data with which to confirm his hypothesis.

Most—but by no means all—Exaltations tend toward a certain caliber of heroism, depending on the individual type. Storytellers are again encouraged to take the following as rough guidelines rather than hard-and-fast rules.

Solars possess a potential for excellence beyond their fellow men, though they need not have manifested this excellence at the time of their Exaltation (and often have not exercised their true potential in life before they are Exalted). Many are Chosen by the Unconquered Sun at a moment where their skills are put to a life-or-death test, where they heroically put themselves in harm's way in order to succeed. They need not be good people, merely great people, even if that greatness is not immediately obvious.

Lunars are chosen for their potential and proven ability to endure hardship, a sheer tenacity to live and thrive amidst incredible odds and life-threatening danger. Stubbornly refusing to die and displaying an incredible streak of individualism—tempered with recognition of one's place within the larger world—can result in one becoming a Chosen of Luna.

Dragon-Blooded are not chosen by any higher power. The vagaries of chance determine their Exaltation and relative power before they are born. The Primordial power of the Terrestrial Exaltation tends not to manifest within the meek, though when it does, those Chosen of the Dragons seldom remain meek for long. Over time, their Charms and natural aspect powers cultivate a sense of superiority to mortals.

Sidereals are also chosen before they are born, destined to Exalt as Viziers. As with Dragon-Blooded, weak-willed Sidereals either die early or learn to adapt to their situation, accepting their roles as guardians of Heaven and fate, however reluctantly. Those Chosen of the Maidens who were adventuring heroic mortals look at their earlier lives as training sessions that taught them valuable lessons.

Abyssals had the same capacity for heroism and excellence as the Solars do, with one important difference—they were struck down by violence, disease or simple misfortune before that excellence could fully manifest itself. The characters must have been capable of receiving a Solar Exaltation, but at the moment of death, the Black Exaltation offers them a choice—life eternal in exchange for becoming a servant of death and Oblivion. They must accept the Exaltation or die, but they are always given a choice, and their damnation is their own.

Infernals are likewise capable of receiving Solar Exaltation, but with another important difference—when the time came to manifest their excellence and show their courage, they backed down from a chance at a greater destiny, refusing to place themselves fully within harm's way to succeed. In the moments of horrible regret after failing to answer destiny's call, they are approached by a demon who offers them a second chance at greatness.

Alchemicals are chosen over a long period of successive reincarnations. A mortals game taking place

Why Exaltation?

It might seem that we're devoting a lot of discussion to the process of Exaltation in a chapter devoted to the storytelling of mortals, and that's true. Although we list apotheosis and a successful resolution of the conflict of the series as a possible end to a heroic mortals game—and although we emphasize keeping the game small and changing the world in small ways—mortal heroes rarely change Creation in a manner satisfactory to their players. A conflict only remains interesting if the stakes are continually raised, and when heroic mortals attempt to play at a higher level of the game, they will run headlong into Celestial Exaltation, either by receiving it themselves or encountering someone it has Chosen. Exaltation enables the players to retain their Motivation and human attitudes (at least for a few decades) and still make a difference in the setting, and the great variety of character involved in Exaltation ensures that some players will meet the criteria. Eventually, the players will be faced with a series of choices. They can choose not to answer the call of heroism and return to the lives of Children of Earth, they can attempt to ascend to godhood, they can keep playing on the international level with their limited capabilities, they can Exalt, or they can die.

over several generations in Autochthonia might well end with the souls of the characters catalyzing a new Alchemical Exalt. Only a soul that has proven its heroism and dedication to the ideals of a specific caste through numerous reincarnations is capable of energizing the birthing matrix and bringing consciousness to the Chosen of Autochthon.

The Conflict Resolved

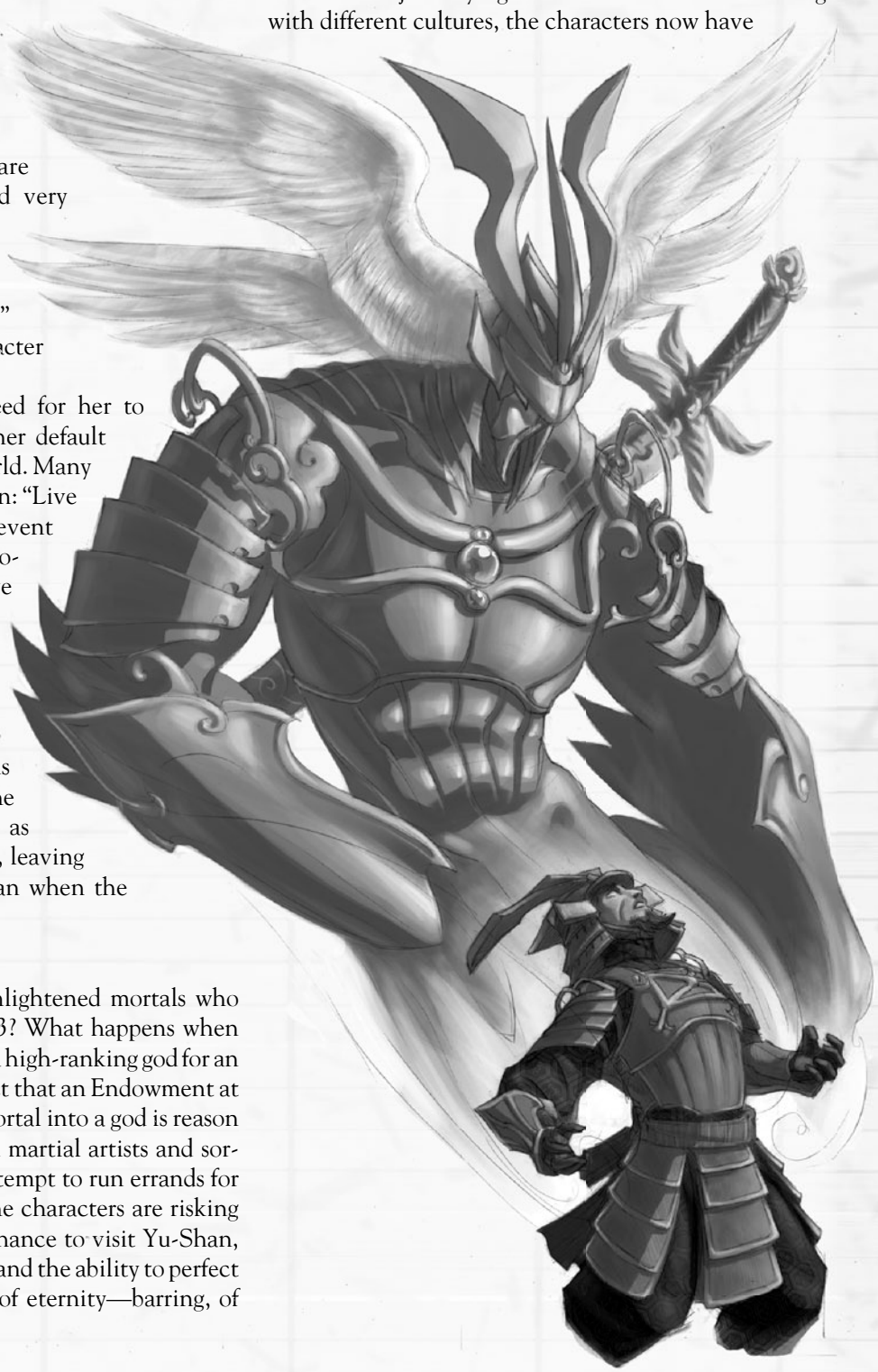
As mentioned before, even heroic mortals often have goals and Motivations that are ultimately both transitory and very achievable, such as, "Find my kidnapped daughter," or, "Retrieve my family's heirloom from the Gunzota Redoubt." What happens when the character achieves her Motivation?

Obviously, there is no need for her to continue adventuring, unless her default Motivation is to explore the world. Many mortals have but one Motivation: "Live a good life." Even after a crisis event causes them to change their Motivation, heroes will usually have another to fall back on if they choose to return to being Children of Earth. Storytellers are urged to talk to their players before concluding the series, to see if other Motivations can be found. Alternatively, the events of the story could serve as a form of traumatic self-growth, leaving the character a better hero than when the story began.

Apotheosis

What happens to those enlightened mortals who reach the pinnacle of Essence 3? What happens when the conquering heroes petition a high-ranking god for an Endowment of Essence? The fact that an Endowment at the pinnacle can transform a mortal into a god is reason enough for many heroic mortal martial artists and sorcerers to go adventuring and attempt to run errands for the most important of gods. The characters are risking everything for immortality, a chance to visit Yu-Shan, freedom from want and disease, and the ability to perfect their chosen skills for the rest of eternity—barring, of course, their duties as gods.

The story need not end there, either. The newly ascended gods are given a reception both warm and icy, split between those seeking to curry favor with the obviously puissant divinities and those resenting the former mortals for their successful attempt at metaphysical upward mobility. The themes of the series need not change either. After journeying about Creation and interacting with different cultures, the characters now have



an ecumenopolis to explore and a whole new world of harsh intrigues and different cultures. The first thing the players have to do, sadly, is find a job…

Suggestions on using gods as characters can be found in **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**.

Mortals, Training, Essence and Experience

Except as noted in this section, mortals gain experience points, spend them and train for new traits at the same rate that Solars do. Most of this table is available in **Exalted**, but it is reprinted here for convenience. Note that unless they take the appropriate Merit, heroic mortals have only one Favored Ability. A mortal need not have Awakened his Essence in order to raise his Essence rating, but he must be able to perceive and wield the fundamental forces of reality to benefit from an Essence pool. Without becoming enlightened, an Essence rating higher than 1 affects only various derived traits, such as calculation of defense values and the minimum dice rolled for a penalized action.

Heroic mortals who undergo the effects of Training Charms, such as Tiger-Warrior Training Technique (see **Exalted**, p. 198), benefit from them as normal and go into experience point debt if they cannot pay the cost of the trait increases up front.

Backgrounds and Experience

The main **Exalted** rulebook gives rules for purchasing starting Backgrounds, but does not discuss how to raise a character's Backgrounds once play has begun. Since Backgrounds are especially important to mortals, this topic bears serious discussion before play begins. Please see the free **Exalted** errata, which is available for download from *http://www.white-wolf.com/downloads*. See also the discussion of Backgrounds in **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Dragon-Blooded** or **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars**.

Heroic Mortal Experience Costs

Trait	Cost	Training Times
Essence	rating x 20	(Essence) months
New Martial Arts Charm (Martial Arts Favored)	12	(Min. Ability) weeks
New Martial Arts Charm	15	(Min Ability + Min Essence) weeks
New Sorcery Spell	15	(spell circle) weeks
Thaumaturgical Degree (Occult Favored)	8	(Degree) weeks
Thaumaturgical Degree	10	(Degree) months
Thaumaturgical Procedure (Occult Favored)	1	One day
Thaumaturgical Procedure	1	One week

MORTALS AND GOD-BLOODED

EXALTED SECOND EDITION

Name: _____ Concept: _____
Player: _____ Motivation: _____
Archetype/ Heritage: _____ Profession/ Endowment: _____

Attributes

Strength ●OOOO Charisma ●OOOO Perception ●OOOO
Dexterity ●OOOO Manipulation ●OOOO Intelligence ●OOOO
Stamina ●OOOO Appearance ●OOOO Wits ●OOOO

Abilities

Warrior

☐ Archery OOOOO
☐ Martial Arts OOOOO
☐ Melee OOOOO
☐ Thrown OOOOO
☐ War OOOOO

Priest

☐ Integrity OOOOO
☐ Performance OOOOO
☐ Presence OOOOO
☐ Resistance OOOOO
☐ Survival OOOOO

Savant

☐ Craft OOOOO
☐ Investigation OOOOO
☐ Lore OOOOO
☐ Medicine OOOOO
☐ Occult OOOOO

Criminal

☐ Athletics OOOOO
☐ Awareness OOOOO
☐ Dodge OOOOO
☐ Larceny OOOOO
☐ Stealth OOOOO

Broker

☐ Bureaucracy OOOOO
☐ Linguistics OOOOO
☐ Ride OOOOO
☐ Sail OOOOO
☐ Socialize OOOOO

Specialties

☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO
☐ _____ OOOOO

Advantages

Backgrounds

_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO

Charms/Mutations

Name	Cost	Name	Cost

Weapons

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Merits

_____
_____
_____
_____

Flaws

_____
_____
_____
_____

Willpower

O O O O O O O O O O

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Soak

B_____ L_____ A_____

Health

-0	☐☐☐☐☐
-1	☐☐☐☐☐
-2	☐☐☐☐☐
	☐☐☐☐☐
-4	☐
Incapacitated	☐

Virtues

Compassion ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Temperance ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Conviction ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐
Valor ●OOOO ☐☐☐☐☐

Essence

● O O O O O

Pool ____ / ____
Committed ____ / ____

Experience